

Christ Church Freemantle

The Parish of Freemantle: A History



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Introduction

The history of Freemantle is all around us. Despite the rapidly changing nature of the area and the loss of many older houses, many of the features of Freemantle past are still reflected in the road names we have today; the fir grove, the foundry, the lake and the park road leading to the mansion house. Even the names of some of the people who were pivotal to Freemantle's early development are found in Hewitts (sic) Road and Payne's Road.

Freemantle Farm

For some time, Freemantle was simply the name of a farm house with lands belonging to it within the Parish of Millbrook near to Southampton. The first known written mention of Freemantle was during the 14th Century, when the owner of 'land in Mullebrook called Fremantel' was said to be William Ace, the son of Odo¹. The Ace family were well connected within the town of Southampton in the 13th and 14th centuries, owning property within the town walls as well as land in Freemantle, Millbrook, Shirley and Hill. A Benedict Ace is listed as mayor and keeper of the King's wines in the 1230s at Southampton. William and John Ace are listed as having mortgaged out land in Freemantle to a Richard Imberd (who was town mayor in 1342).

By the sixteenth century, it was owned by a Southampton merchant, Thomas Fasshon, who was also mayor of Southampton in 1545 and later an MP for the town².

Freemantle Hall

During the 1770s the farmhouse had been converted into a gentleman's residence (situated near to where Mansion Road and Payne's Road are today). Baker's Guide to Southampton describes it as 'the seat of James Amyatt Esq., a pretty situation well sheltered with trees³'. James Amyatt was an MP for Totnes in Devon who later served as one of Southampton's MPs between 1790 and 1807 and who had spent considerable money in developing Freemantle. Amyatt was said to have christened his black servant as George Freemantle in 1774⁴.

By 1790, Freemantle is the residence of John Jarrett Esq who is said to have lavished much money on the house. In Baker's Southampton Guide of 1804, some of the apartments are described as 'sumptuously elegant⁵'. It seems that the most striking feature of the house was its dining room, which is described as 'thirty-two by twenty-one feet, [and] has its walls entirely lined with Italian marble.' Amongst Jarrett's circle of friends was the poet William Cowper, who during his visits would enjoy country walks through the fields of Freemantle. He mentioned in letters to his cousin Lady Hesketh years later, 'Am I not your cousin, with whom you have wandered in the fields of Freemantle and to Bevis' Mount?⁶'.

The last family to own the Freemantle Hall and estate was the Hewett Family, from Leicestershire, the head of which was General Rt Hon Sir George Hewett, (1750-1840). General Hewett had been a distinguished soldier, serving in North America during the War of Independence in the 1770s, and had latterly been commander-in-chief in India and Ireland. He was present at the Coronation of George IV in 1821, and was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council in Ireland and attended court. When retiring from public life, he was in need of a more settled life for his family and purchased Freemantle in 1822. It was described thus 'Sir George then became desirous of procuring a more settled habitation; and he purchased Freemantle, a very agreeable and gentlemanly residence near Southampton, on the banks of that beautiful river, in which he finally established his family'⁷. He was well known throughout the area, being involved with Millbrook and Shirley parish churches and giving an annual feast for the schoolchildren of the district, 'sending his wagons to fetch the merry multitude for their simple banquet on his lawn.'⁸

In Skelton's Guide to Southampton in 1823, Freemantle Hall is described: '[It] is finished and decorated in the modern style and has a very handsome dining parlour, lined with statuary and other valuable marbles. The drawing room and library are very tastefully adorned with arabesque paintings'⁹

General Sir George Hewett died at Freemantle on 21st March 1840, aged 89. The funeral was taken by the Minister at Shirley, Revd. William Orgar and the Rector of Millbrook Revd. Phillips with great solemnity at St James Church Shirley. It was said that so many people wanted to pay their respects that the church was open for three hours after the ceremony. Sir George was buried in a vault under the altar of St James' with a memorial placed in the old St Nicholas Church, Millbrook (the church was demolished in 1939). General Sir George Hewett is also still commemorated in Freemantle in Sir Georges Road and Hewitt's (sic) Road. He was described thus in a memoir written at the request of his family 'His figure was tall, and particularly erect and soldier-like; his countenance commanding and intelligent; his manners and appearance those of a finished gentleman: he possessed a fund of general knowledge... which, with the advantage of a lively and playful wit, combined with the most scrupulous delicacy, gave peculiar interest to his conversation.'¹⁰

The Freemantle estate passed to his eldest son, George Henry Hewett (1791-1862), now the 2nd Baronet. In the 1851 England census¹¹, we can see the family staying at Freemantle with his wife Louisa, one of his sisters Mary Ann, his daughter also called Mary Ann, and eight servants.

Early development - Sampson Payne and Charlotte Hewett

In 1852, Sir George Henry Hewett moved his family back to Leicestershire and put the 'first rate gentleman's mansion' and all 143 acres of the estate up for sale by public auction. The sale plan of the estate described the property as:

'an excellent family residence of handsome elevation, placed in a finely timbered and richly undulated park, with beautiful lawn, pleasure grounds with umbrageous and gravelled walks and garden. Hot and succession houses and grapery, lake stocked with fish, ornamental woods and plantations and rich meadow, pasture and arable lands, partly enclosed by park palings, with well arranged farming buildings'¹².

The auction was due to take place on 15th June 1852 at Matcham's Royal Hotel in Above Bar, Southampton. However, the night before the auction, Mr Sampson Payne, a local china and glass merchant, purchased the estate by private treaty¹³. Sampson Payne was not only a merchant and local property developer, he was a respected town councillor of many years standing, and also Mayor of Southampton from 1854-1856.

After the sale, Sampson Payne pulled down the old hall, selling it for building materials, and disposed of the land in smaller parcels ranging in value from £20 to £100 to various property developers and building societies. Within a short time, he had also intersected the park by nearly twenty roads. His pivotal role in the development of Freemantle is marked in the parish by the naming of a main road in the area as 'Payne's Road'. The first house built after the sale was in Waterloo Road and appropriately named 'Alpha Cottage'. In a short time a number of houses were erected, principally in Millbrook Road and Park Road, so that by 1855 the population of Freemantle reached 1200¹⁴.

Sampson Payne died suddenly on 23rd May 1856 at his home Clayfield (near Southampton), whilst still the town Mayor, aged 55. The London Standard stated that 'the event has cast a gloom over the whole town, and expressions of regret are heard on all sides.'¹⁵

It was the increasing population of Freemantle which induced Charlotte Hewett, the sister of the last owner of Freemantle estate (now owning a property at Elmfield, Millbrook Road since her brother had sold the estate) to contact Archdeacon Joseph Cotton Wigram, then residing at the Deanery in Southampton, urging him to begin plans for a church and school in the area. She then wrote to those who had bought various parts of the estate and who were building houses rapidly throughout the area. She wrote:

*Elmfield, Southampton
August 10th 1855*

Gentlemen,

I will make no apologies for addressing you. My interest in the Estate of Freemantle is natural and well-known and I am, together with yourselves, as a proprietor, under obligations to endeavour as quickly as possible to provide for the spiritual interests of the rapidly increasing population there.

The Bishop has promised to form it into a District and to appoint a Clergyman, as soon as any provision is made for the discharge of the duties worship and a gentleman possessing the highest testimonials is only waiting till this step is accomplished to offer himself to the Bishop and when once fixed in the District he willingly undertakes to carry out all the business involved in setting up a Church, Schools, etc. A lot of land can be obtained in an eligible situation on the Estate containing a building easily convertible into a temporary place of worship, the price of which is £310-10-0, we must add something to this to fund the necessary alterations and might therefore to collect not less than £400 as the first and grand step in this important affair. I do not hesitate to invite you all as proprietors of the land and providers of the plan which has caused such a growth of population to come forward with earnestness to assist in the work which is no less our duty than our interest.

*I am, Gentlemen
yours obediently
Charlotte Hewett*

After interviews, the Bishop of Winchester then appointed the Revd Abraham Sedgwick (1819-1891) to the spiritual charge of the district.

Beginnings of a Church and School community

The Revd Abraham Sedgwick arrived in Freemantle on 2nd November 1855, initially living temporarily at Lake House in Payne's Road, then at other houses also in Payne's Road, Redthorn House¹⁶, then at Derwent Lodge. The laundry room, an upper room over the bailiff's house, had been fitted up and licensed as a temporary place of worship and Divine Service was performed for the first time in Freemantle on the afternoon of Sunday February 3rd 1856. The benches or stools on this occasion were borrowed from the club room of the Nelson Hotel in the nearby hamlet of Four Posts¹⁷. On Easter Day, March 23rd 1856, one of the rooms in the Bailiffs House was opened as a Sunday School. On the same day also began a morning communion service, at which were fifteen communicants. The Revd. Sedgwick noted that the offertory for the day was 17s 4d¹⁸.

The first christening took place in the temporary church on 4th May 1856, when William Scott, the son of George and Sarah Scott, of Sir George's Road, Freemantle was baptised. The last service in the Upper Room took place on September 21st 1856, with the Revd. W L Sharpe, Incumbent of Barton, Isle of Wight officiating, as Revd. Sedgwick had been confined to bed with inflammation of the lungs. The next Sunday, September 28th 1856, Divine Service was conducted in the West End of the Laundry Buildings - formerly used as a Wash House and Brewery.

After six weeks absence due to ill health, Revd. Sedgwick resumed his duties on November 9th. Chinnock the Builders then started work on the East End of the Laundry Building, gutting it to be converted into a girls' school room. Despite this good beginning, on the 31st December 1856, we are told that 'The builder having failed, the Creditors seized upon all moveable materials - a regular scramble. Even the bell, which was the property of the Clergyman, was carried off'.¹⁹

The girls' school room was 'opened for divine service' on 29th March 1857. To commemorate the completion of the school room, a service was held in the Parish Church, Millbrook on August 5th 1857 and a sermon preached by the Bishop of Southampton in the afternoon. Archdeacon Wigram expressed his hope that the school would be a 'well-conducted Christian school, which should embrace within its walls the whole of this populous neighbourhood.'²⁰ In the evening there was a large tea party at the new school rooms at which 'about 500 persons partook of tea'.

On August 17th 1857, the Day Schools finally opened. The first Master of the Boys' School was Thomas Winser and the Mistress of Girls' School was his wife Elizabeth Winser, former Master and Mistress of Highfield School. There were 120 pupils and fourteen teachers. The school rooms were described as 'a capacious and elegant structure, erected on the site of the laundry and wash-house at the rear of the spot where Freemantle-house stood'²¹

The Building of Christ Church Freemantle

Now that the day schools had been established, the task to build a permanent church began. On 25th July 1861, the foundation stone of the church was laid by Archdeacon Jacob. It had been planned that Miss Hewett would lay the stone; however she was unable to do so, on account of ill health. At the beginning of the service, the Archdeacon, the Rector of the mother Parish of Millbrook, Revd Stewart and Revd Sedgwick met at the school rooms and processed to the foundation stone, then all sang the hymn 'All people that on earth do dwell'. It was reported by the Hampshire Independent that throughout the proceedings, 'the rain fell in drenching showers.'²² A bottle containing parchment detailing all those who were involved, and containing silver and copper coins of the year was placed in a cavity in the stone.

The same article in the Hampshire Independent newspaper noted that the Archdeacon recognised that the 'character of the population was peculiar', in that there were no rich landowners to provide a church and school and those building the church did not currently have the money to complete the project. The article also said 'the choir contributed throughout to the interest of the proceedings'²³

A local man, Alfred Watts, was tasked with building the church. In the 1861 census, we find Mr Watts living in Park Road with his wife, cousin, servant and apprentice. By 1881, he was living in Marlands Road, Southampton and is described as a 'Builder & Surveyor, Employing 31 Men & 3 Boys'²⁴.

It appears that the building of the church did not go smoothly. There were constant financial problems and it is said that the line of red bricks about five feet above the ground mark the point at which the building stopped due to lack of money and insolvency of the builder²⁵. During the four years that the church was being built, the Revd. Sedgwick spent much of the time taking leave of absence from the parish 'on account of his failing health'; at one point spending time working in other parishes in Surrey and the Isle of Wight and during the autumn of 1862, he even spent time in the USA and Niagara Falls²⁶.

According to a later newspaper article²⁷, whilst the church walls were still only six feet high, a fight took place on the site of the baptistery, one early Sunday morning, the participants having come from London. The same article also claims that the church site was used as a playground for the schoolchildren at the time. Revd. Sedgwick returned to the parish in November 1864 by which time the church was nearing completion²⁸. The church was designed by the architect William White (1825-1900). White had already designed several churches in the area, for example St Michael & All Angels, Lyndhurst and has been described as an 'odd, original, gifted, cranky, over-sanguine and unconventional architect'²⁹.

On 27th July 1865 the church was consecrated by Dr Sumner, Bishop of Winchester. The sermon preached by the Bishop was from the text from John's gospel 'In my Father's house are many mansions'. Three memorial windows were put into the church the day before the Consecration, executed by Bailie of Wardour Street, London. One window to the memory of W P Ranwell, by his parents, another to the memory of Mrs Agnes Sedgwick, Mother of the Revd. Sedgwick and the third to Mrs Margaret Walmsley, mother of Ellen Sedgwick, the Wife of the Incumbent. Four lance windows each containing an Apostle were put in by subscriptions through the efforts of the Churchwarden, Charles S Phillips. At that time, the church was still without a tower and spire. The building had cost £4,000 and the organ had cost £400. The first baptism in the newly built church took place on 29th July 1865, when Arthur Fowler Newton was baptised, the son of local schoolmaster Thomas Newton and his wife Catherine.

The new Parish of Freemantle

On the 19th April 1866 the Ecclesiastical Commission of England agreed that Freemantle would be a separate district from Millbrook, and declared the new Church of the Parish of Christ Church, Freemantle 'shall be and be deemed

a Rectory'. The first wedding ceremony in the church on 1st May 1866 was between Harry Collins a Hairdresser of St Mary's Parish and Sarah Jane Dorothy Lawrence, of Freemantle. After the ceremony, the Revd Sedgwick presented the couple with a family bible. Churchwarden Phillips presented to the Bride a handsomely bound prayer book and the Rector's wife, Mrs Ellen Sedgwick gave a 'companion to the altar' (a devotional book on Holy Communion).

After living at several temporary houses, Revd. Sedgwick oversaw the planning of a permanent Rectory after the Bishop of Winchester gave £500 towards a Rectory in 1869. Messrs Martin and Son of Southampton were appointed as the builders, and a Mr A Burt of Southampton was the architect. The 1869 Freemantle Home Visitor notes that 'the building will be plain but very substantial.'³⁰ In addition to the Bishop, others who contributed to the fund included Mrs Sampson Payne, Mr Alfred Watts, Revd Sedgwick and Miss Hewett.

Several of Freemantle's public houses were also built during this time of growth, for example, the Waterloo Arms, the Freemantle Hotel, the Wellington Arms (named the Swan until the 1970s) and the Star and Garter (originally The Star) were all built in the 1850s and 1860s.

In 1871, Bishop Wilberforce preached at a special service to begin to raise funds for the school. The school had grown so rapidly, that it was necessary to enlarge the school buildings to include an infants school. The Revd Sedgwick resigned due to ill health in 1871 on the advice of the Bishop for a 'less arduous sphere of labour'³¹ and became the Vicar of Tovil in Maidstone, Kent. He was replaced by the Revd. John D'Arcy Warcop Preston (1824-1901), who had formerly served as an Army Chaplain during the wars in Crimea in the 1850s.

On 21st August 1873, Charlotte Hewett, the former supporter and benefactor of the school and church died at Winchester. She was buried in the crypt of St James' Church Shirley, where her father had been interred many years previously.

The Revd Preston oversaw the building of the infants school, and then started raising money for the building of a tower and spire for the church, which was eventually completed in 1875, to a height of 127½ feet. A special opening service was held in April 1875, at which many clergy were present, including the first Rector of Freemantle, Revd. Sedgwick, who read the second lesson³².

According to a local story, the Revd. Preston climbed to the top of the spire and placed the last stone in position! Due to lack of money, a clock face was added even though the clock mechanism could not yet be afforded. The large west window of the church showing the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel) was added in 1875, presented by Robert Ingram, Churchwarden.

The population of Freemantle had now grown to over 5000, and it is said that this population growth had caused deficient drainage, and bad lighting and paving throughout the parish. It was during this time that the church founded many charitable organisations, such as the Freemantle Charitable and Provident Dispensary, a means of helping poorer parishioners obtain medical help in the days before free medical care. A dispensary (in Park Road) continued on and off until the advent of the National Health Service in 1948.

It appears to have been a particularly cold Christmas in 1878 as the Hampshire Advertiser reported that Freemantle Lake had frozen to a depth of one foot and that the number of skaters was so numerous that 'police have been stationed at the entrance to preserve order, and the ice has been brushed and kept clean for the skaters by men employed for the purpose.'³³

On 27th November 1880 the Waterloo Hall was opened at 52 Waterloo Road, built for public meetings and concerts, and was well used by a very active Temperance Society led by the Rector and Curate of the Parish.³⁴ By 1892 the site was being used as the school of Negus E Phipps, then by 1898 the location was used as the Harcourt Liberal and Radical Club, succeeded after the First World War by the Freemantle Club, which is still in business today.

Saints Alive!

It seems that Freemantle has a claim to be involved in the very beginnings of Southampton Football Club. In November 1885, St Mary's Church Young Men's Association Football Club, in their very first match, beat Freemantle 5-1. Freemantle 'Magpies' formed in 1884, and were based at the Waterloo Arms Pub next door to the church and played at their ground at the now Civil Service Sports ground. Amongst those in the Freemantle team in the formative years was Revd. George D'Arcy, who was a curate at the church from 1885-90. The team was also the home of several players who later went on to greater things, such as Harry Moger who eventually played as goalkeeper for Southampton and then Manchester United. There were discussions about merging Freemantle and St Mary's teams, in order to obtain Freemantle's Shirley Road ground, although this came to nothing.³⁵ Freemantle football club continued for many years, until the team finally folded in 1905.

The Church organ, which had been installed when the church had been built, was enlarged in 1885 as it had been seen as inadequate for the size of the church. Much work was completed, including an entirely new swell organ and new stops of 'choice quality' being added and was carried out by a Mr H.C. Sims of the Southampton Organ Works³⁶.

Shocking Fatality at Freemantle

A great tragedy occurred at Freemantle Lake when the son of the Rector, Walter Charles Preston was found dead with a gunshot wound to his head in May 1885.

It was reported in the Hampshire Advertiser that Walter Preston was a Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Navy who had often spent time at the Lake with his brother shooting rats. The inquest noted that there had been no struggle and delivered the equivalent of an open verdict, stating 'the death was as a result of a gunshot wound, but there was no evidence to show how it occurred'³⁷. The event was reported in many national newspapers, some of which focussed on the suggestion that the deceased had recently failed an examination for promotion. He was described however in the local press 'By his genial manner he made many friends at Freemantle, and the sad event is a cause for general regret'. He was buried at Southampton Cemetery, and as a mark of respect the local traders closed their shutters and blinds were closed at the majority of the local houses.

There seems to be a real growth in church building in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1884-5, Freemantle Congregational Church was built on the corner of Roberts Road and Shirley Road as the Congregationalists in Southampton sought to expand into neighbouring areas. There was already a Wesleyan Church in Park Road (now Elim Church Centre) by 1883 and a Primitive Methodist church was built in Firgrove Road.

Likewise, a Mission Church was built by the parish in Grove Road and dedicated to St Monica at evensong on 24 September 1891 by the Bishop of Guildford. The reason for building the mission church was explained in the Hampshire Advertiser 'owing to the distance of some parts of the upper portion of Freemantle, familiarly known as "Upper Canada" from Christ Church, it has been felt for some time that an effort be made to provide the inhabitants with some place where they could worship without having to travel a long distance to attend church'³⁸. Although part of the parish of Freemantle and sharing the clergy and other resources, St Monica's Mission had its own choir and Sunday school and it was said that it had its own individual character.

Revd. Preston left the parish after twenty-one years of service in 1892 and retired, aged 68. He was replaced by Revd. Thomas Wilson Fair (1842-1911), who had until recently been a curate of Holy Trinity, Ryde on the Isle of Wight.

Freemantle Parish Magazine is born

In January 1893, Revd. Fair began the first edition of Freemantle Parish Magazine, a publication still printed today. He began with the words 'My Dear Friends, In addressing my first parochial letter to you, as the incumbent of this large and important parish, I do so with mingled feelings of thankfulness and encouragement...I will endeavour to do my best to promote the welfare of the people entrusted to my care.'³⁹

The magazine also reported the progress of the Schools, noting that Mr Marshall had been appointed Headmaster of the boys' school and that the attendance had increased. There were 764 pupils in total in the Infants, Boys and Girls schools,

with an average attendance of 700. Reports were also made of the Freemantle Soup Kitchen which had distributed over 13,000 pints of soup during the year.

Freemantle becomes part of Southampton

In the same year of 1893, the Shirley and Freemantle District Council was formed and a council building was built on the corner of Shirley Road and Grove Road. It was a rather short-lived council, as both Freemantle and Shirley became part of Southampton on 27th March 1895, and the building became Shirley Library (until 1969).

The first known commemoration of the church's dedication took place in 1895, after Revd. Fair researched the early years of the church⁴⁰. It was at these celebrations that it was decided to raise funds for new oak choir stalls in the Parish Church to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Sydney Kelway Pope, an architect and member of the congregation (who had also designed the clock tower now at Bitterne Triangle), drew up the design; the plans also included renovation of the flooring in the chancel and a new brass altar rail. The Diamond Jubilee celebrations began in June with a special thanksgiving service, for which the church was festooned with bunting and flags, and over the altar were texts such as 'Thou grantest the Queen a long life'. The new choir stalls were dedicated on 25th July 1897, on the thirty-second anniversary of the consecration of the church. Much of the fundraising was carried out by the Guild of St Andrew, the young men of the church.

During October 1897, Mr Robert Ingram, a long serving and 'unassuming' member of the church died, aged 80. According to his obituary in the Parish Magazine, he had been Churchwarden for over twenty years until 1892, and that 'it was through his influence that most of the stone carving on the pillars was executed'⁴¹.

The first electric tram service from Southampton along Shirley Road started in June 1900⁴², replacing the original horse-drawn buses. Services were soon extended throughout Southampton.

'A great sorrow'

In February 1901, Revd Fair wrote 'A great sorrow has fallen upon the Nation. Our beloved Queen has been taken from us.'⁴³ The Parish Magazine included a portrait of Queen Victoria in the February issue as a commemoration of her long life. During 1901 and 1902, St Monica's Mission was enlarged and the new section dedicated by the Bishop of Southampton.

It was also during this time that the Boer War was taking place in South Africa (Southampton was the major port of embarkation for the war), as Revd. Fair noted 'It is sad to think that another Christmas-tide will soon dawn upon us,

with the war in South Africa still dragging on.'⁴⁴ One of the litany desks in the church is in memory of George William Wiltshire, who was killed in action in South Africa in 1902. Revd. Fair left Freemantle in 1902 having seen the parish grow from a population of 7,000 to 12,000 in a decade. He moved to Eskdale in the Lake District, to be nearer his family as his wife Sarah was ill.

When Revd Fair died in 1911, he was described by colleagues 'He spoke kind and comfortable words, and when he offered prayer to God it was the breakings of his heart, which brought blessing to the sick...'⁴⁵

The Revd Frederick Gilbert Gardiner Jellicoe (1858-1927) became the fourth Rector in 1902, after having left his Curacy in Alverstoke, Gosport. He came from a well-known Southampton sea-faring family; his brother was Admiral John Jellicoe (later Earl Jellicoe), who was in command at the Battle of Jutland. Revd. Jellicoe had also played cricket for Oxford University and Hampshire in his younger years. In late 1904 a new chancel screen was completed in memory of Anne Worth and funds were raised the next year to fix the heating system, Revd. Jellicoe described the winter as especially harsh, because 'we sit and shiver inside the church'⁴⁶. Carvings were subsequently completed on the font as the gift of the children of the parish.

On 10th April 1912, the Titanic sailed from her home port of Southampton on her maiden voyage. Five days later, on 15th April, she sank with great loss of life after striking an iceberg. The disaster had a devastating effect on the people of Southampton, as many of the crew lived in the town and over 500 households lost at least one family member. In lists of the crew of the Titanic, there are several stewards, cooks, firemen and stokers who were living in Freemantle, the majority of whom perished in the sinking⁴⁷. Amongst those who were saved was Frederick Fleet who lived at 9 Norman Road, Freemantle who was a night crow's nest lookout on the Titanic. He had given the warning to the bridge: "We are in danger-iceberg right ahead." He survived the tragedy and was one of the principal witnesses at the inquiry into the disaster⁴⁸. Tragically, Frederick Fleet committed suicide at his home in Norman Road in 1965, two weeks after his wife had died⁴⁹.

'A struggle for our national existence'

In the September 1914 Parish Magazine, the Revd. Jellicoe wrote 'Who could have dreamt a month ago, that less than a week after the issue of our August magazine, a European War would have begun! Yet such is the terrible fact. It has come to nothing more or less than a struggle for our national existence - and that when all seemed fair and smiling and the holiday season had begun.' The Great War that started on 4th August 1914 took a heavy toll on the parish. The war memorial in the church lists 121 men from Freemantle who died during the war and was unveiled in March 1920.

During the war, collections were made for the Red Cross and to raise funds for the extra insurance for the church against aircraft attack. The Girl's School held concerts in aid of comforts for wounded soldiers and needy children. The church itself was in deficit due to added expenditure with extra lighting caused by darkening the windows, and the cost of added insurance.

During 1915, Revd Jellicoe left to become Vicar of New Alresford, and was replaced by Revd Charles Collis, who had come from Barton. According to a later parish magazine, the Revd Collis was said to have a distinct and striking character. From reading the Parish Magazine, after the upheaval of war it appears that Revd. Collis spent much of his time fighting to save the schools. According to a history of the church, 'he was obliged to launch one appeal after another for almost the whole of his time⁵⁰'.

The impact of the war upon the Parish is reflected in the Parish Magazine articles by Revd. Collis. In 1916 he wrote 'Why is this War lasting so long?...Hundreds of thousands have given their lives for our benefit! Hundreds of thousands have been wounded in Battle for our safety! Millions on millions are offering all they have, even life itself for their country and our defence!' Many families lost a son or brother or husband, in some cases, whole families were deeply affected and lost several family members. An example of this is the Boyce family from Mansion Road. Edwin Boyce and Alice Eliza Harris had four sons George, Cresswell, Ernest and Reginald, all of whom served during the war. In the September 1916 Parish Magazine, Revd. Collis reported 'I had a very nice letter from Bombardier C E Boyce from the front in reply to mine in last month's issue. His mother sends him the Parish Magazine every month and he is glad to have news of his old chums.⁵¹' Cresswell was killed in action on December 19th, 1916 aged 19, and his brother George died on October 9th 1917 on the Western Front aged 27. George's brother in law Charlie Edmund Blake died of pneumonia at the end of the war and is also listed on the church memorial.

In 1916, a Junior Brotherhood was formed in the church, and in the February 1916 magazine, its function was explained 'We shall do our best to keep the growing boy from developing into that sad character - a street corner hobbledo-hoy⁵²'. It was in 1918 that Miss Eva Thorne and her sister Winifred formed Freemantle Girl's Club. The Girl's Club took a practical view of youth provision and provided sporting, musical and social opportunities for the girls of the parish. The Club would continue until 1984, having changed its name to the Freemantle Senior Club to reflect the rising age of its members.

In 1922, the Southampton tram services were extended to include a route from Holyrood Church or the Royal Pier to Millbrook, along Waterloo Road, passing both church and school and terminating at Millbrook Station. This regular route only lasted until 1935, however workmen's services continued along this route until 1947⁵³. After many aborted plans, a Parish Hall (situated in the upper part of Payne's Road) was finally acquired and opened in 1926.

Construction began on what was later named the Western Docks in 1927, a grand undertaking that took five years, and reclaimed 400 acres of land along the edge of Freemantle and Millbrook, increasing the area and status of Southampton Docks. The first ship to use the new dock was Cunard's Mauritania in October 1932. Expansion of the docks continued throughout the 1930s, to include the new King George V Dry Dock, which was opened in 1933.

Let there be (electric) light!

After years of gas lighting, electric lighting was installed in the Parish church in 1928. In the same year an organ was bought for the Mission church and the Missions to Seamen donated a bell. The Revd Collis left Freemantle in 1929, and was replaced by Revd George Uppington, who was formerly the Rector of Stockbridge.

It was during this time that the organ at the parish church was rebuilt and in a parish magazine in that year of 1931, it was first reported that the organ is older than the church. It was also suggested that the organ had originally come from Salisbury Cathedral; however there is no evidence to support this.

One of the best-known shops in Freemantle, Clarence Stores, was established during the 1930s and is still there today. In 1935, the Revd. Frederick Giles Reeves became Rector after Revd Uppington left to go to Winchester. The Revd Reeves had formerly been Rector of Pinxton in Derbyshire. It was during 1937 that the fabric hangings and high altar were replaced by a new altar, wooden reredos and panelling, given by Agnes Worth in memory of her father George Worth. It was designed by Mr Ravenscroft of Milford on Sea, and it was said that all the work was carried out by Hampshire craftsmen. The new altar was dedicated by the Bishop of Winchester on 7 March 1937. That same year, a Lady Chapel was created in the north transept, in memory of members of several local families.

3rd September 1939, Trinity XIII: 'War started 11:15am'.

When the Second World War began on 3rd September 1939, the Revd. Reeves noted the fact in the parish register, simply as '3rd September 1939, Trinity XIII: 'War started 11:15am'. Such entries in the registers continue throughout the war, and attest to the fact that services continued, even when they were disrupted by air raids and damage to the church. On 13th October 1940 when the air raid alarm was sounded at 11:45am during Matins, it was noted in the register 'Air raid at 11:45. Service suspended, collection at door'⁵⁴.

In the Parish Magazine, the Revd. Reeves expressed his feelings on the war 'The long dreaded awful business of war has started again. We tried to avoid the wastage of life but we could not.⁵⁵' The Parish Magazine also initially kept parishioners up to date with the activities of the school children that had been

evacuated to Kingsclere, Headley, and Ashford Hill. A public air raid shelter was built in the school grounds as the children were away. During the war, the church struggled financially; the churchwardens were reported as 'despondent' as they were unable to pay their quota to the diocese because so many people had left the area due to evacuation or joining the armed forces.

Freemantle had frequent air raids because of its proximity to the docks and town, and suffered alongside the rest of Southampton on the worst nights of air raids on 30th November and 1st December 1940. During that one weekend, over 800 bombs and 9,000 incendiaries were dropped on Southampton, with 137 people killed, 1,169 properties destroyed and many familiar landmarks were lost⁵⁶. Locally, Freemantle Congregational Church in Shirley Road was destroyed, the Freemantle Hotel in Payne's Road received a direct hit, many houses in the parish were damaged and the church sustained damage to the roof and the west window.

The bombing continued into 1941, when in June of that year, three panels of the East Window were damaged. The church roof was holed in three places, when kerbstones were hurled through the roof by bomb blasts, damaging the floors and pews. The Rectory was damaged by a near miss at the same time, with a thirty foot crater just twelve yards from the Rectory door. During a bombing raid on 7th July 1941 the Sawyers Arm's pub in Nelson Road was destroyed, killing the landlord John Hibberd, and seriously injuring his wife Violet who died a week later in hospital.

Much changed in the church during the war. Because of the lack of men, women were allowed to join the choir for the first time, although they offered to step down after the war. In addition, the iron railings around the outside of the church were taken away in 1942, to be melted down for the war effort. The Mission church was taken over by the Dockland Settlement during the war, and the Church Hall was used by the Ministry of Health to look after those who had been bombed out of their homes.

The Revd. Reeves left Freemantle in 1944 to become Vicar of Bursledon, to be replaced later that year by Revd. William Arthur Henville Barnes, who had previously been a Missions to Seamen chaplain in Sydney and in Antwerp. In the same year, James Russell died after over 48 years as Verger of the Parish Church. He was replaced by Mr Edwin Boyce, who would serve as Verger until replaced by his son Reginald Boyce (the well-loved school caretaker).

The Parish Magazines of 1945 show the parish slowly getting back to normality after the war, with choristers being demobbed from the army and the Mission Church being returned to the parish in 1946. Thanksgiving Services took place to celebrate the end of war, including open air services at one of which

the Bishop of Southampton preached. The special Thanksgiving Fete in July 1945 was opened by the Mayoress, Mrs Dyas. On 21st July 1946 there was a special Sea Services Sunday Service, which was broadcast from Christ Church, conducted by the Rector, Revd Barnes.

The Guild of St Francis was established in 1945, encouraged by the then curate Revd. Hedley Shearing. This was a group for younger members of the parish, which held talks, camps and performed theatrical productions. They even had their own hut at the back of the Parish Hall that was built in 1947. In 1949, Reginald Boyce was elected verger for life and served until 1969, when he resigned due to ill health.

The last tram ran in Southampton in December 1949, thus ending over seventy years of tramways in Southampton. The old tram routes were replaced by Bus routes, including routes along Waterloo Road and Shirley Road, which still run today.

'Filling our church with worshipping people'

The Revd Barnes left the Parish in 1951, to be replaced by Revd Edgar Dowse. The Revd Dowse was described as 'keen on the 'high powered' type of evangelism'⁵⁷. It was during his tenure in 1951 that the illuminated cross was added to the church spire, in memory of Councillor Job Charles Dyas, the former mayor who lived in Payne's Road and who had died in 1945. The first meeting of the Women's Fellowship was in 1952, a church group which still meets today. Freemantle celebrated the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II with special services in the church, and a special coronation bazaar and fete.

In 1954, there was a 'Mission to Freemantle', because as Revd Dowse explained, 'the great enterprise to which we must all give our attention is that of filling our church with worshipping people'. The Mission was seemingly an outstanding success, although the Revd Dowse warned that 'the good work done in the Mission must not be undone by sloth.'⁵⁸ That same year, Stanley H Foy, a local shopkeeper stood down as churchwarden after nine years, to be replaced by George Lee, who would remain as Churchwarden until 1983. The junction of Shirley Road and Howard Road is still locally known as Foy's Corner after the drapery, furniture and other shops his family kept for over fifty years.

At a meeting of the Parochial Church Council in 1955, it was suggested that the large Rectory at 151 Payne's Road should be sold and another more manageable house bought as a Rectory in its stead. By 1956, the Rectory had moved to 125 Payne's Road and the old Rectory sold. In 1957, the Revd Dowse left to go to Bethnal Green in London, and was replaced by the Revd Raymond Spittle. It was written in the Southern Evening Echo that the Revd Dowse and Revd Spittle were old friends from their earlier days in London⁵⁹.

1957 saw the completion of a new church building for Freemantle Congregational Church (now the United Reformed Church) in Shirley Road to replace the old church, which had been destroyed during the war.

'Ooze, mud and odours'

In October 1958, Freemantle Lake was finally made into a park after several years of work when it was opened by the Mayor, Alderman Hammond. The Lake and its surrounding area had been reserved as an open space in 1938, but due to the war, no work was carried out. The lake was then designated during the war as a static water supply for fire fighting. Whilst the lake had once been described as charming, by the late 1920s, it was described as having 'a melancholy charm, for its glory had departed'⁶⁰. In a map of 1947, the lake is designated as principally marshland. It was partially filled in from 1952, and a comment upon the park opening in 1958 tells us much about the former state of the lake 'it is no longer associated with rats, mosquitoes, stagnation, ooze, mud and odours'⁶¹. The tons of spoil required to fill in the marshy lake was provided by British American Tobacco in Millbrook and 100 local school children came to celebrate the opening, from Freemantle, Western and Foundry Lane Schools.

Southampton was made a City during 1964 and the Queen later visited the city in 1966, driving down Waterloo Road, past Freemantle School and Church. Local Shirley photographers Cardwell's produced a commemorative photograph of the occasion. 1965 marked the Centenary of the building of the Parish Church, and a full programme was planned to celebrate, including a Centenary Fete opened by Earl Jellicoe in the presence of the Mayor of Southampton and a Festal Evensong with the Bishop of Winchester. In 1968, the Holm oak behind the church, which was at least 250 years old, had to be removed due to its dangerous position⁶².

The Revd Spittle left Freemantle in 1969 and during the vacancy the Church Council began planning to sell the Parish Hall, which needed considerable work. It appears that the church was critically struggling at this time, so much so that there were suggestions that the parish could be merged with another. In November 1969, the Parochial Church Council was eventually told that there had been plans to make Christ Church redundant, but that the matter had been reconsidered⁶³. In early 1970, the Revd Bryan Apps was invited by Bishop Faulkner Allison to be the Priest in Charge of Christ Church Freemantle on the proviso that unless he obtained complete support within four years, the church could still be closed.

Reginald Boyce, the former verger and school caretaker who lived in the schoolhouse in Waterloo Road, died in 1970 aged 71. In the Parish Magazine, George Lee described his love for the church and school and said that whenever Mr Boyce went into the church 'his face lit up [...] like a child going on holiday.'⁶⁴

Rebuilding and renovation

In 1970, Revd Apps changed the pattern of Worship and instituted the 10:00am Parish Communion to replace 11:00am Matins. In the years that followed, St Monica's Mission and the church hall were sold in order to reinstate the parish church with new flooring, heating system and wiring, and to replace the pews with chairs. In April 1971, Stanley H Foy, the former churchwarden died aged 82. Not only had he been a draper and furnisher at his shop his father had founded in Shirley Road for over fifty years, he had also been a town councillor, representing Freemantle from 1924 to 1945 and a former President of Freemantle Club⁶⁵. Even when he retired to Rownham's Green, he still retained a link with the church, and his name adorns the restoration of the small window of St Thomas in the north wall of the Church that he had given in 1969.

The Parish Rooms (to include a kitchen, toilets and meeting rooms) were built at the back of the church in 1971, to replace the former parish hall. The last service took place in St Monica's Mission on Palm Sunday, 26th March 1972 after 81 years as the daughter church of the parish. After this initial work had taken place, Freemantle was confirmed as a viable parish and Revd Apps was made Rector.

Plans were subsequently made to reorder the rest of the church, with the plans being published on the front cover of the Parish News in 1973⁶⁶. The plans show that a nave altar and a semi circular altar rail and a portable font were suggested but not carried out. In 1974-5, the baptistery was moved to the South Transept. The chancel screen was removed and is said to have been sold to form a minstrel's gallery in a Tudor Barn in Devon⁶⁷. In 1974, the pews were replaced by 300 chairs, which had been purchased from St Mary's Church, and the original lectern was moved to make way for an eagle lectern, given by Holy Trinity Bournemouth.

The late 1960s and early 1970s marked a time of great change in Freemantle, with the splitting of Millbrook Road into Millbrook Road West and East, creating a new road layout and bridge to deal with increased traffic between Millbrook and Southampton city centre. There was a great deal of compulsory purchase by the council in order to demolish houses in Millbrook and Payne's Road in order to carry out the work. The industrial unrest and power cuts in the country during the early 1970s were noted in the Parish News when the Revd Apps wrote in his article about politics and religion, 'as I write these words I am in imminent danger of having all the lights go out!'⁶⁸

New School Building

After reorganisation of the schools into a primary school (renamed Freemantle First School in 1970/1), it was decided to replace the old school buildings with a new, modern building. There had been plans for the school to move to another

site altogether, however these plans were abandoned, as the Revd Apps said 'it is in the interests of all those who want to see the links between Church and School maintained that the two buildings should be adjacent to one another.'⁶⁹ Whilst the work was taking place, it was reported in the November 1972 magazine that rumours had spread that there was an unexploded bomb on the site of the new school. No such bomb was found.

The new building was completed and opened in November 1974, and the old school building was demolished, leaving just the old school hall building as a nursery. A special service of dedication was conducted by the Rector, who said a prayer of blessing in each of the classrooms⁷⁰.

'Rather grey and sober times'

The parish celebrated Southampton Football Club winning the FA Cup in 1976 with a special red and white striped edition of the Parish News. The reason for this special cover was explained on the back of the magazine 'this was a brilliant victory which has lifted the people of Southampton in rather grey and sober times.'⁷¹ The celebrations continued the next year with the Queen's Silver Jubilee in June 1977 with a special thanksgiving service in the church and street parties in Mansion Road, Blighmont Crescent and Foundry Lane.

The Revd. Apps left the parish in 1978 to move to the parish of All Saints, Southbourne, and was replaced by the Revd Michael Fullagar, who until recently had worked in Zambia. In 1980, the former Rectory at 151 Payne's Road, which had been converted into flats, was finally demolished.

In 1982, urgent repairs to both the church roof and the Organ took place and the money was slowly raised to pay for both. During the 1980s, the Church was increasingly involved in ecumenism, and Christ Church Freemantle and Freemantle United Reformed Church (formerly the Congregational Church) held annual joint services for several years.

Falklands War

1982 also saw the beginning of the Falklands War, with the Southampton based liner Canberra being requisitioned as both a troop ship and a prisoner of war ship during the conflict, and the Queen Elizabeth II, another Southampton based liner was used as a hospital ship and troop transport. At the end of the war, both the Canberra and the 'QE2' arrived home at Southampton, bringing home several thousand British troops.

Freemantle Community Centre was built in 1982 and a number of sheltered housing developments were built during the 1980s, especially in Payne's Road, including Lake House, Sycamore Lodge (on the site of the old Rectory) and Shaftesbury House, which now has close links with both church and school. The

1980s also saw the beginnings of major changes in the once thriving Park Road shopping area, with the loss of Scott's the Butchers, Bert Hiscock's Fishmongers and Ernest Spacagna's Barber Shop after many years in the area. Aylwins, which had provided coal, straw and animal feed for many years closed a few years later, and then Wilkins the Bakers (previously Cadena Bakery) on the corner of Kingston Road was converted into flats.

In March 1983, the Revd Fullagar ended the rather outmoded tradition that the Easter Offering each year would be given to the Rector. From now on all the much needed money would go into church funds instead⁷². Later in that year, a newly obtained festal cope was used for the first time, which had been given by the newly redundant church of St Peter's in Commercial Road⁷³.

It was in 1984 that Freemantle elected its first female churchwarden when Margaret Lamb was elected. The same year, the parish lost a much-loved church worker, Eva Thorne, who died in October 1984 aged 85. Miss Thorne had not only run the Freemantle Girl's/Senior Club for many years, but had been a long serving and active member of the parochial church council, a keen supporter of missionary work, a deanery synod member and Sunday school teacher. Eva Thorne however was probably best known for her musical talents, being a founder member of Southampton Operatic Society and a member of the Philharmonic Society. She sang as a soloist and conducted the Ellwood Ladies Choir for over forty years, a choir that often held concerts in Freemantle Church⁷⁴. The Revd Fullagar left Freemantle in 1987 for Westbury, Buckinghamshire.

The Revd Ian Firmstone, formerly a curate in North Stoneham, became the thirteenth Rector in 1988 and spent a considerable amount of his time restoring the church building. In 1989, the damaged East Window was finally taken away for renovation. Also in 1989, the old and crumbling Rectory at 125 Payne's Road was sold, and demolished to make way for a new Rectory a few doors away (129 Payne's Road)⁷⁵. The church roof was replaced in 1990 after it had been badly damaged due to severe gales and the east window and windows in the choir vestry began to be restored⁷⁶. The scaffolding eventually came down from around the church in Spring and Summer 1991.

The Summer Fete now moved to the school grounds, after many years having been located in the Rectory garden. After setting most of the work in motion, the Revd Firmstone left Freemantle in 1990 to go to Littleport, Cambridgeshire. During the vacancy, the church celebrated its 125th Anniversary with a special Songs of Praise in July 1990, and a Nine Lessons and Carols service at Christmas with the Bishop of Southampton, Rt. Revd John Perry preaching. The restored East Window of the church was finally replaced in time for the induction service of the new Rector, Revd Canon Ronald Diss in March 1991 (previously the Vicar of Maybush). The newly restored rose window of the ascension was reinstated in time for Ascension Day of the same year.

George Lee

On 1st March 1992, St David's Day, the Parish Room was renamed the George Lee Room in honour of George Lee. The dedication reads 'This room is dedicated in memory of George James Lee (1904-1990). In his untiring and devoted service to Christ Church, he was the longest serving churchwarden (1954-1983), treasurer and parish clerk for many years, and Churchwarden Emeritus and Verger at the time of his calling to the higher life.'⁷⁷ In late 1992, the former meeting room and store was turned into a small chapel at the back of the church. It was later named the St Monica Chapel in a special service in honour of the former mission church, which had been closed in 1972. The boarded up window which had been broken many years beforehand was replaced with a new simple design showing Christ and Mary Magdalene in the garden. The next year, the rose window of the west window showing the Sacrifice of Isaac, which had been missing since the Second World War, was finally replaced.

The Freemantle Festival took place in May 1993, with a week of events, such as a Quiz Evening, a Victorian Evening, an Art and Craft Display and a Civic Service. The organ was completely rebuilt again during 1994 and to celebrate the completion of the work, a weekend of celebrations (including an organ concert using the still unfinished organ!) took place at the Dedication weekend⁷⁸.

Revd. Diss left Freemantle in August 1996, and retired to Kent. In January of the following year, the Revd Nigel Coates, previously the Chaplain at the University of Southampton arrived in the parish. He was instituted as Priest in Charge, due to planned pastoral reorganisation within Southampton, but was made Rector in 2000. A Four Choirs Festival was arranged for October 1997, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the choir stalls, with the choirs of Fawley, Highfield and Freemantle (as well as the congregation as the fourth choir!) singing together⁷⁹.

'Freezemantle' no more!

After many years of inefficient heating and extreme cold within the Parish church, a new gas central heating system was installed in 1999, costing over £50,000. The new warmth was celebrated in 'Warm up to Pentecost' events, during which the former Rector, Revd Canon Ronald Diss visited to officially switch on the heating.

Sadly, during the weekend, the Church Organist and Choir Master Kenneth Milsom died. Ken Milsom had been a long serving Organist, PCC member and worker in the church and parish for many years. In the parish news, several friends paid tribute to him, describing him as 'a kind and gentle man...dedicated to Freemantle for over fifty years...with a deep knowledge and love of music.'⁸⁰

The new millennium was commemorated with special services at New Year in which the bell was rung, together with many churches across the country and

the planting of a Millennium Yew in the Church garden. It was also in this year that the church developed an Internet site for the first time. The Church and School began a joint summer fete in 2001, reflecting the old parish fetes of many years ago when church and school would work together in the grounds of the old Rectory for the community. A new limed oak altar and credence table was designed for St Monica's Chapel in 2002, made by a local business, the Walnut Tree Workshop and was dedicated by Bishop Simon Burrows in memory of Nellie Ramell and Hilda Carter. A carving of a cruse of oil was included on the back of the altar, to represent St Monica and all widows⁸¹. The parish of Freemantle was enlarged in 2002 to take in the streets between the original boundary of Foundry Lane and Waterhouse Lane and that same year there was a display and open day in the church celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the Queen, and the last fifty years in the parish.

The following year in 2003, a Festival was held, a decade after the original Freemantle Festival, including a concert, quiz evening and outing. Freemantle Park was reordered during 2003, including a new shelter designed as a meeting place for teenagers in the area. The Freemantle Youth Forum assisted the designer Pete Codling with what was termed the Freemantle Community Pavilion⁸². Freemantle Post Office was unfortunately closed during 2005; a Post Office had been in the Parish in Park Road since at least 1869.

'A homecoming'

In April 2005, Revd Coates left Freemantle to become Canon Pastor at Southwell Minster. In January of the following year, the Revd Brian Cox came to Freemantle from his previous parish of Knight's Enham near Andover. In the Bishop of Southampton's address at the Licensing, it was explained that this was somewhat of a homecoming for Brian and Lys Cox, as not only had Brian been a curate in the nearby parish of Maybush, but also before ordination, he had worked in Freemantle for many years.

In 2006 the church and school celebrated together to mark the 150th anniversary of the beginnings of both the church community and school in Freemantle. A special thanksgiving service was held in the church attended by the whole school, after which the Bishop of Winchester rededicated the original school bell⁸³.

The work of the church in the last few years has often featured a more outward looking focus, with the introduction of a 'Tick Tock' Parent and Toddler Group, Children's activity days, concerts and art exhibitions and the introduction of a Family Service on the first Sunday of the month. In addition to this, several members of the church are also involved with the Street Pastors scheme in Southampton City Centre, which ministers to people in the late night pubs and clubs and there are regular guest preachers from local and national charities.

In 2010 the church organ was temporarily put out of service due to the large amount of work and money required to get it restored. An electronic organ was purchased to ensure that music of a high quality could be provided. The gift of music has been of increasing importance, with regular orchestral concerts taking place within the church, and joint choral services with other local churches such as Swaythling and Peartree. Performances of Faure's Requiem and Stainer's Crucifixion have enhanced worship during holy week and Winchester Chamber Orchestra performs at the Candlelit Carol Service at Christmas.

The longest serving female churchwarden Gwen Kitcher stood down in 2010 after twenty four years as warden. During her time as churchwarden, she had worked with five different Rectors and six fellow wardens. 2011 saw the renovation of the illuminated cross on the church tower on its 60th birthday year, when church people worked alongside local helpers to take the cross down, clean, repaint and renovate until it was hauled back up the tower in time for Holy Week and Easter.

Several local landmarks have been lost in Freemantle including three pubs – The Star and Garter, The Duchess of Wellington and the Park Hotel have all closed, and several large old houses have been lost in a flurry of apartment building as the Parish changes to reflect the changes in the city and society. There is also change in the school as it becomes Freemantle C of E Community Academy and returns full circle to serve children up to the age of eleven, as it did many years ago.

Much has changed in Freemantle over time; parish halls, rectories, and even school buildings have come and gone. However, at the centre of the parish, both the school and church still survive and this is because our forebears were not merely content with keeping the status quo, but had the vision, strength and vitality to adapt and to face many challenges and changes. Indeed, without the vision and energy of Charlotte Hewett and her associates over 150 years ago, the church and school may never have been established.

Rectors of Freemantle

1855 - 1871	Revd. Abraham Sedgwick
1871 - 1892	Revd. John D'Arcy Warcop Preston
1892 - 1902	Revd. Thomas Wilson Fair
1902 - 1915	Revd. Frederick Gilbert Gardiner Jellicoe
1915 - 1929	Revd. Charles Collis
1929 - 1935	Revd. George Uppington
1935 - 1944	Revd. Frederick Giles Reeves
1944 - 1951	Revd. William Arthur Henville Barnes
1951 - 1957	Revd. Edgar Dowse
1957 - 1969	Revd. Henry Raymond Charles Spittle
1970 - 1978	Revd. Bryan Gerald Apps (Priest in charge 1970-1972, Rector 1973-78)
1978 - 1987	Revd. Michael Nelson Fullagar
1988 - 1990	Revd. Ian Harry Firmstone
1991 - 1996	Revd. Canon Ronald George Diss
1997 - 2005	Revd. Nigel John Coates (Priest in Charge 1997-2000, Rector 2000-2005)
2006 -	Revd. Brian Leslie Cox (Priest in Charge 2006-2009, Rector 2010 -)

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