

Jim Whiteley

Jim Whiteley's father was the Treasurer at St. Mary's throughout the 1950s, filling in the ledgers with a pen dipped in ink, and then Churchwarden for three years during the 1960s. Jim himself was Churchwarden from 1995 to 2000 immediately after the completion of the hall extension. He is now an Assistant Churchwarden and his wife, Sylvia, is a Sidesperson.



Jim is a local man. Born in 1946 in Epsom Hospital, he and his two older sisters lived with their parents in Timbercroft before moving to Chadacre Road. On his retirement from the bank, Jim's father moved the family to Stoke d'Abernon, but Jim moved back

to the area when he married Sylvia and bought the house in which they both still live. Jim attended Stoneleigh East Infants and Junior Schools, where there were classes of 48 children, and then went on to a private school in Thames Ditton, where he excelled at Maths and became good at English.

The school closed down after he had been there for three years, and he then transferred to Coombe House School in New Malden. While there he learned to play rugby, which became a lifelong passion. Jim played in the first team as wing three-quarter for Esher Rugby Club until he got married at 29. He is still a member of the club, going to watch

every home game. When he was playing, rugby was a huge commitment, and weekends during his twenties were spent travelling all over the country to play matches.

On leaving school, Jim went to work in engineering in Staines. Firstly in the world of gears, and then in the world of tiny tubes. His knowledge of maths and engineering has been invaluable in repairing the fabric of St. Mary's Church. He oversaw the reconstruction of the concrete plinths supporting the lych gate, and mended the cup holding the Churchwarden's stave. He also, with Peter Leverton, retiled part of the south aisle roof using discarded tiles from the demolished kitchen extension of the former vicarage.

Jim says that he did not have much time for girls in his youth because rugby took over his life. He knew Sylvia because her cousin lived next door to his

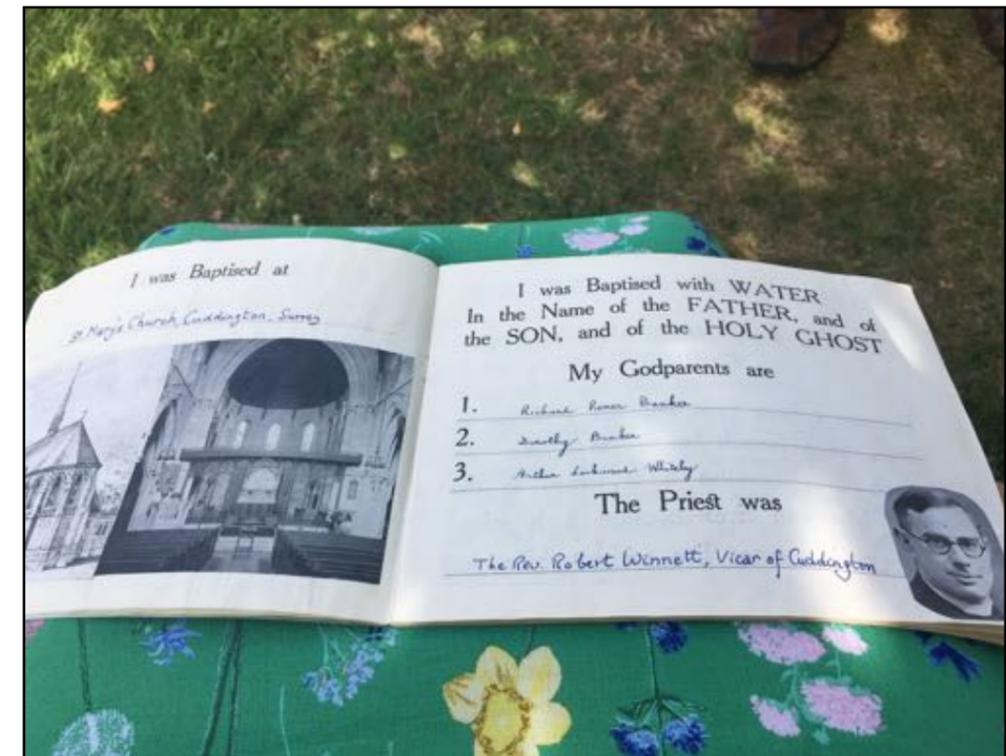
family in Chadacre Road, and he was friends with her cousin. Sylvia was therefore part of the group of friends he went around with. When it came to taking a partner to a 21st party, or to a tennis club dance, he would often invite Sylvia and their relationship grew from there. They married in 1975 and had two children, Richard and Jennifer.



As a boy, Jim went to Sunday School at St. John's Stoneleigh before joining the Sunday School at St. Mary's. He was confirmed there in 1960. He thinks that he is now one of the people who has attended St. Mary's

the longest. Margaret Rymill being perhaps the only longer serving member. When he first became Churchwarden, his fellow Churchwarden was Peter Leverton. Subsequently he was Churchwarden with Christine White. He found it fascinating to see his father's entries in the 'terrier' – the Churchwarden's logbook of works – and then to write his own entries. His father donated the Vicar's ceremonial cope in memory of his grandmother, and a pair of silver candlesticks in memory of his grandfather. His family's close association with St. Mary's stretches back a long way.

In his time, Jim helped organise two 'hedge days' a year, when volunteers from the congregation would turn up with their shears and help trim the hedges around the Church grounds. There is far more work involved with this than meets the eye and Shaun Potter, who does this now singlehandedly, does a fantastic job - he also does an awful lot more to keep



Jim's baptism presentation booklet from 1946

the Church looking good. The hedge days generate around half a ton of clippings each time, which gives some idea of the scale of the task.

Jim is now happy being an Assistant Churchwarden and vividly remembers Peter Leverton's words to him, when he stepped down as Churchwarden. "For goodness sake carry on doing the work for the Church. A lot needs to be done. Be pro-active, don't wait for it to fall apart". Wise words indeed.