

Remembering Alice

presented by Martin Jones, on behalf of
her friends at All Saints' and in the
Parish of Gornal and Sedgley

May 26th 2020

Alice's life – why our faith is important

Her life story shows us:

- How people in church help one another
- Why the church means so much to local people
- The beauty of a life spent faithful to Christ and to the Church
- The help and guidance and consistency that the clergy provide
- How faith sustains you in very difficult and testing times

Remembering Alice

- Most people at All Saints' will remember Alice in recent times, when she lived in sheltered accommodation in The Walk in Sedgley.
- Until quite recently she could be seen every Sunday morning, walking through Sedgley to attend the 10.30am service
- Her favourite spot was towards the back, on the south side of the nave
- It was only in the last couple of years that she needed to be looked after at a care home in Stourbridge
- Alas she died last month, having reached the wonderful age of 97



Alice's ancestors at All Saints'

- Alice Bradley's kin have been associated with All Saints' Church for at least 180 years.
- Her maiden name was Wedge - a family gravestone in the churchyard dates from the 1830s, carrying the names of some of her forebears.
- A heart-rending inscription tells of two little Wedge boys, aged just 4 and 2, who died in 1830 (possibly early victims of the cholera epidemic that swept the village in that decade).
- They are buried in the vault with their parents, who only survived them for another ten years or so, both dying in their thirties.



Born in Hall Street

- Alice was born at number 1, Hall Street, Sedgley on 22 November 1922, the eldest of five Wedge girls (Alice, Mary, Marjorie, Elsie and Joyce). Her father was a skilled woodturning machinist, who over his career worked for several of the large car factories in the Midlands.
- Alice can be seen on the far right.



- The picture on the right shows her in the middle with her sisters in the same location in Hall Street, in the 1980s.
- In this picture, she can be seen in the centre

Growing Up

- As Alice was growing up, the condition of her family's stone cottage deteriorated until ultimately, when she was 12, it was condemned as unfit for human habitation. The local council wasn't building any new housing in Sedgley, so the Wedges went to live in Glen Road, Upper Gornal. They returned to Sedgley five years later, settling in **Westfield Road**.



Memories of the church in the 1930s

- In the 1930s, the church was the hub of the village community and Alice attended **Sunday School** morning and afternoon. Children were rewarded for good attendance at the annual prize giving: she received a hymn book the first year, then a bible the following year. Alice still had her bible, given to her in 1930 when the vicar was **Revd Marley** and the curate was Revd Allcock.





Sunday School

- Up to the age of seven, Alice went to the Junior section which was in a separate building from the main school. Alice remembers sitting on little chairs with the rest of the children, being taught in groups.
- At seven you would go into the Seniors and stay there until leaving age. Activities consisted of reading bible stories and singing hymns. Attendance was not compulsory and while some children left as they got older, most stayed on. Occasionally she resented going, but generally enjoyed it because her friends from Queen Victoria School were there for company. In the 30s and 40s the church used to be full every Sunday.
- In those days the balcony was used and, as a child, Alice used to run up the stairs and take her place with her friends by the rail right at the front.



Leaving School

- On leaving school at the age of 14, Alice went to work at Greenaway's in Dixon's Green Dudley, where they made gents' trousers.
- Her job was to snip the cotton off the seams – she earned just six shillings a week. She was later reassigned to a steam iron, putting creases in the trousers, but the hot steam and fluff from the material constantly made her throat hoarse, so she left there to work at the **Ever Ready** factory in Wolverhampton, where she assembled torches and bicycle lamps.

War Work

- Her job was making fuses for anti-aircraft (Ack-Ack) shells at Villiers in Wolverhampton, many of which were destined for the defence of Malta.
- On the lighter side, Alice joined her friends at the WRVS on Penn Road, Wolverhampton, who ran dances on Saturday nights. It was the highlight of her week.



Alice marries at All Saints'

- 1946, **Revd Sargeant** married Ted and Alice at All Saints' Church. But before they took their vows Alice recalls receiving a half-hour's "talking to" in front of the congregation, in which the Reverend "laid the law down", at one point taking a cross out of his pocket and shaking it in front of them in true 'fire and brimstone' fashion.
- It was a time of great post-war austerity and Alice had to borrow her wedding dress and veil from friends. After the wedding there was no money for a honeymoon and they had to go back to live with her parents at first, then moved into rented rooms at The Paddock, Coseley - a period Alice describes as "hard times".



Children

- Alice gave birth to a **son in 1949** and **two daughters in the 50s**. As soon as they were old enough, Alice took them to Sunday School. Her son joined the All Saints' scout troop (a family tradition as her father had been in the troop as a boy) and her daughters joined All Saints' Brownie pack.





Post-war work

- In the 1950s much of Alice's time was taken up with earning enough to keep her family. She worked at **Orme, Evans and Co, a bucket and jug manufacturer** in Great Brickkiln Street, Wolverhampton, where she used a power press to stamp out parts from big sheets of metal; also spot and seam-welding the components together.
- She went to work part-time in the canteen at **Beacon Centre for the Blind**
- She became the manageress of **Repairwell's dry cleaners** in High Street, Sedgley.
- Later she worked for **Woolworths, first in Dudley, then in their Wolverhampton** store for ten years.

Her beloved Ted dies; return to church

- Tragically, her beloved husband Ted died aged 56, in 1971. Faced with the need to work and run her house, Alice wasn't able to attend church quite so frequently.
- However when her sister Elsie died aged 68 in 1996, she found coming back to church helped with her bereavement.
- By this time **Revd Peter Ashby** was vicar and Alice joined the Mothers' Union, many of whom she already knew.





Mothers' Union Choir

- She joined the Mothers' Union Choir when it began in 1998 and took an active part in rehearsing and performing. She fondly recalls outings to Hereford Cathedral Flower Festival and Llangollen Music Festival.



Alice Bradley
1922-2020