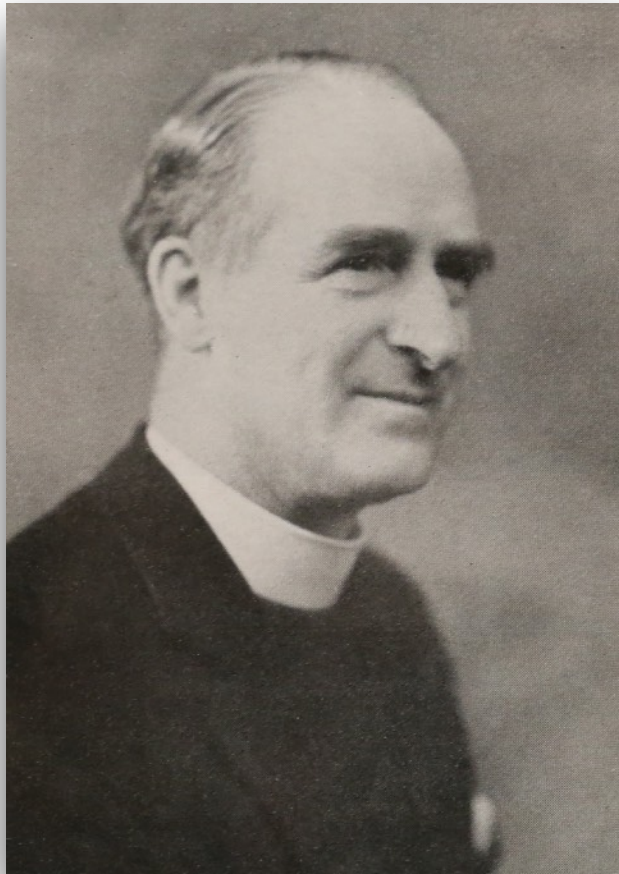


Rectors of Kilbride

Rev. John Horace Freeman, M.A. (Rector from 1951 until 1952)



Rev. John Horace Freeman, M.A.

Introduction

Rev. John Horace Freeman was rector in Kilbride Parish Church for only eight months before his untimely death in July 1952. He was instituted to the parish of Kilbride in November 1951, succeeding Rev. John Redmond who had retired earlier that year after twenty one years, initially as curate-in-charge and then as rector. Prior to coming to Kilbride Rev. John Freeman had been in various roles in both Ireland and England and had been universally respected and popular with fellow clergy and laity alike. During one appointment as vicar of St Mark's in Exeter, Co. Devon he would experience the horrors of war as in May 1942 the city was attacked in a number of air raids and a number of his parishioners died as a result. It is believed that it had a deep effect on him personally and soon after he left Exeter to return to Ireland, to the small country parish of Easkey, Co. Sligo. He moved from Easkey to the large city parish of St James's in Belfast before

becoming rector in Kilbride. It was during his ministry in Kilbride that he died suddenly during a pastoral visit.

Freeman Family Background

The surname Freeman has Anglo-Saxon origins dating from before the Norman conquest in 1066. It is commonly found in all the Celtic nations and the name is derived from the Old English words 'freoman' and 'frigman' meaning one freed from bound servitude from an overlord. The Freeman family of interest in this narrative has been researched back a number of generations to the coastal town of Kingstown, located south of the city of Dublin in Co. Dublin. Kingstown was so-called following the conquest of Ireland by William III in 1689 and 1690 and was an important port for cross-channel shipping across the Irish sea to Great Britain. Another coastal town in Co. Cork was named Queenstown at the same time in honour of King William's wife and cousin, Queen Mary. Following the partition of Ireland in 1922 the new government for the 'Free State' renamed the two towns Dún Laoghaire and Cobh respectively.

John was a favoured Christian name in the Freeman family lineage. John Freeman, Rev. John H. Freeman's grandfather was a baker in Kingstown in 1850 and John Freeman, his father, was also a baker and it was his trade that probably took him to Kells in Co. Meath. He was recorded as being a journeyman baker at the time of his marriage to Margaret Flannery in Kells Parish Church. Margaret worked as a domestic servant in the Rectory in Kells and her employer was Rev. Joseph S. Bell who officiated at her marriage to John Freeman in 1881. Margaret was originally from Clifden in Co. Galway. John and Margaret Freeman remained in Kells where their first two children, John and Jane, were born before moving to the Rathmines/Rathfarnham area of south Dublin.

John Horace Freeman (1896 - 1951)

John Horace Freeman was the eighth child in a family of eleven children and was born on 14th December 1896 in Rathfarnham. (The first born in this large family was also called John who died of bronchitis aged six days in 1882 in Kells. As so often happened in Ireland another child was subsequently named in memory of the child who had died).

Freeman was educated in the choir school of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin and later Mountjoy school in north Dublin. Traditionally those seeking ordination in the Church of Ireland undertook their academic education in the School of Divinity, Trinity College, Dublin. Freeman attended Trinity College where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1922. His education continued here where he received his theological training and was awarded the Divinity Testamonium Downes Prize in 1924. Freeman's love of church music was prominent throughout his ministry and

undoubtedly it began, and was nurtured, during his early education in St Patrick's Cathedral.



St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin



Trinity College, Dublin

Bangor Parish Church



St Comgall's Church, Bangor

On 25th March 1924 Freeman, having moved north, was ordained by the Lord Bishop of Down and Connor and Dromore, Rt Rev. Charles T.P. Grierson, in the private chapel of the Bishop's House in Belfast. In April 1924 he was admitted to the order of deacon for the curacy of Bangor Parish in the diocese of Down. The then rector of Bangor was Rev. James Albert Carey who had become seriously ill in December 1923 and Freeman was appointed as an additional curate to assist with parochial duties during the rector's enforced absence. It was during his curacy here that he met Olive Mary Madden from Bangor, whose family were parishioners in St Comgall's. Olive had also studied in Trinity College and their studies would have overlapped (it is possible that they met for the first time in Trinity College). Olive's father, Thomas Howard Madden, was an accountant who later became Company Secretary of the Ulster Steamship Company, which had offices in the Ulster Chambers Building in Waring Street, Belfast. This was a significant shipping company established in Belfast in 1877 and which traded on numerous international routes until 1979.

In March 1925, Freeman was ordained by the Lord Bishop, Rt Rev. Charles T.P. Grierson, in Lurgan Parish Church and was admitted into priest's orders. He remained as a curate in St Comgall's, on a salary of £275 per annum. Rev. James A. Carey died on 20th June 1925 aged 46 and he was replaced by Rev. Arthur William Barton (later Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland) who was instituted as rector on 24th August 1925.

St Anne's Cathedral

Bangor Parish Church now had a new rector and as he began his incumbency Freeman, also in August 1925, moved from St Comgall's to become Curate and Dean's Vicar in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.



The Cathedral Church of St Anne's, Belfast

The cathedral was where he married Olive Madden on 14th September, 1927 and The Very Reverend Henry R. Brett, the Dean of Belfast, officiated, assisted by Rev. T.H. Madden, a cousin of the bride



REV. JOHN H. FREEMAN AND HIS BRIDE, MISS OLIVE MADDEN, LEAVING ST. ANNE'S CATHEDRAL, BELFAST, AFTER THEIR MARRIAGE.

Exeter Cathedral

Freeman remained in St Anne's for a further two years during which period he was recorded as having greatly endeared himself to the large congregation. His ministry then called him to serve in Exeter cathedral where he was installed as Priest-Vicar on 1st January 1929, one of three such posts in the cathedral. In September 1929 he was appointed Minor Canon of the cathedral and Chaplain to the Forces. It was during his ministry here than he first became acquainted with Lord William Cecil, Bishop of Exeter. Cecil was Bishop from 1916 until his death in July 1936 and was renowned as being somewhat eccentric. He was said to feed crumpets to rats and throw powdered copper sulphate on to the fire to turn the flames green! He was also nicknamed 'Fish'. He was noted for his long white beard and for riding a bicycle around the city. He was to have a major influence on Rev. John Freeman's life and indeed in later years during his incumbency in Easkey he too was well know for his own unique eccentricities.



Lord William Cecil, Bishop of Exeter

During their time in Exeter the Freemans' first child, Geoffrey John, was born in 1930. The family remained in Exeter until Rev. John Freeman's appointment as incumbent in St Mark's Church, Ballysillan, Belfast in July 1932.



Exeter Cathedral

St Mark's Church, Ballysillan



St Mark's Church, Ligonel Road, Ballysillan



Interior of church



Rev. J.H. Freeman,
Rector of St Mark's, Ballysillan

The Freeman family moved to the spacious rectory on the Ligoneil Road in the summer of 1932 and the family was blessed with a second child with the arrival of their first daughter, Claire Margaret, in 1933.

Freeman took a keen interest in the activities of the Church Lads' Brigade and he was instrumental in forming a company in St Mark's in 1934. In April of that year he was elected as Battalion Chaplain for the 1st Battalion, Down and Connor and Dromore Regiment, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. The following month he was the special preacher at the organisation's annual parade held in St Mark's, Ballysillan on 20th May.

Freeman was Rector in St Mark's for only two years when the Bishop of Exeter contacted him and offered him the living of the new ecclesiastical parish of St Mark's, Exeter. This was a parish in the Heavitree area of Exeter and a new church was required to accommodate the rapidly expanding population of the city. Freeman had greatly impressed the Bishop during his time in Exeter Cathedral and the Bishop was confident that Freeman was the right person to carry out the work committed to him.

He accepted the offer and left Belfast, bound for Exeter once more, at the end of September 1934. He had a huge task ahead of him but he would soon show he had the determination and personality to succeed and that the Bishop's confidence in him was well founded.

Freeman was highly revered during his incumbency in Ballysillan and the parishioners were sorry to see him and his family leave. A few years after his death, but after more than twenty years had passed since he had left St Mark's, a clock was installed in the church tower and on Sunday, 25th April, 1954, during the evening service the Bishop, the Right Rev. Charles King Irwin, dedicated it to the memory of the Rev. J. H. Freeman.



Commemoration plaque inside the church

Note. Another former rector of St Bride's, Rev. Paul Redfern, was rector of St Mark's in Ballysillan from 1997 until 2003 when he left to become rector in Kilbride.

St Mark's Church, Exeter



Rev. John H. Freeman, c. 1935

The city of Exeter had seen its population grow considerably in the late 19th and early 20th century and many new houses were constructed in the Heavitree area of the city. A need for a new church was identified in that area and a new church building, St Mark's, was partially completed in 1912. Although not consecrated, it served adequately for a number of years but as the city and the population of the area continued to grow it became apparent that the present, unfinished church could not be enlarged sufficiently on its present site to meet the needs of the now heavily populated parish of Heavitree. In 1919 the suggestion of a new parish separated from the mother parish of Heavitree was made, together with the proposal for building a new church, also to be known as St Mark's, on a new site. Fundraising began and in 1924 a site for the church was secured. In 1929 it was decided that St Mark's should be made into a separate Ecclesiastical district and on 26th June 1930, the creation of the new district was effected with the name of 'The District of St Mark, Exeter.'

The first incumbent of the new district was Rev. Frederick C. Eddy who was instituted by the Bishop of Exeter, Lord William Cecil, on 12th January 1931. Under his leadership fundraising continued and great progress was made but at a cost to the vicar's health, to the extent that he felt compelled to resign the living. Eddy left

Exeter to become vicar in St. James's, West Teignmouth, a small town on the nearby Devon coast.

The Lord Bishop then looked for a replacement who could continue the excellent work done by Eddy and ultimately complete the building of the new church. He needed someone with the personality and strength of body and character who could organise and complete the difficult task of fundraising and bring the vision of a new church to fruition. He knew exactly the person who could succeed in this formidable task. He contacted Rev. John H. Freeman in Belfast who readily agreed to return to Exeter.

Vicar of St Mark's

Rev. John H. Freeman arrived in Exeter in September 1934 to begin his work as the new vicar of the new district of St Mark's. He was instituted by the Bishop of Exeter on 11th October 1934. He very quickly established himself as an inspirational leader in the parish and this was reflected in the number of people attending church. He presided over the parochial meeting held in January 1935 commenting on the lack of room in the old church. In a review of the fundraising for the new church that had been initiated by his predecessor, Rev. F.C. Eddy, he complimented him on his great powers of organisation and his devotion to duty during his short time as vicar of St Mark's. He then said that it had fallen to his lot to carry on where Mr. Eddy had left off and all he could say was that it was the greatest joy of his life to have been called to work in the place.

He was quoted as saying at the meeting;

“One hears in these days so much of empty churches and neglect of worship. This can never be applied to St. Mark's. Frequently on Sunday evenings some of you people have to go away disappointed by inability to find a vacant chair. While in one sense this is an answer to the criticism of decay in churchgoing, it is regrettable that all who come cannot find accommodation. This difficulty we hope to overcome in a few days by the scheme of a sliding door between the church and the church-room, which will afford additional accommodation for people.”

He continued in the meeting by encouraging everyone in the parish to increase their efforts and to find more ways to raise the necessary money to build the new church. He suggested that everyone should promise 6d a week until the church was completed in all its beauty.

In February 1935 the partition wall separating the main body of the church and the church-room behind was altered with folding doors installed to allow seating for an extra 100 people.

He is recorded in the churchwardens' history of the church as having written the following in 1935 regarding the progress towards the building of the new church.

Rev. Freeman takes up the story in an article in the souvenir handbook printed for the laying of the foundation stone ceremony;

“Mr A E B Gloyens and Mr H S Plimsole have very kindly undertaken the work of writing the history of our Parish, and no two men could be more capable of fulfilling this task, for they have watched the steady development of the Parish from its infancy with watchful eyes, and helped to nurse it when young, with devoted hearts, until today, thanks to the labours of those who worked for St Mark’s and are now at rest, as well as to many who are still with us, the Church life of the Parish continues to expand and increase its usefulness year by year.

When I came here as Vicar, twelve months ago, it was difficult to foresee that we should be in the happy position of laying the Foundation Stone of the new Church at this comparatively early date.

On my arrival at St Mark’s the figure for the Building Fund was £5,500 (around £416,000 in today’s terms - 2023) , and I was informed that we had to raise a balance of £4,000 to complete the work of building the new Church. It was thought that a Church to cost £9,000 was as much as our people could manage. Thanks to the architect (Mr E. F. Hooper, L.R.I.B.A.) the Parochial Church Council and the Building Committee, we all agreed, however, that a more attractive and larger Church should be aimed at. When the architect submitted the amended plans we were told that the Church would cost about £15,000, and we were a little doubtful as to the wisdom of attempting the much more expensive building, because our people could not be expected to raise the balance of £10,000.

Nor should we have been in the position of laying the Foundation Stone at this date had it not been for the splendid support we received from kind friends outside the Parish. In this connection we desire to record our very sincere gratitude to the Dean and Chapter of our Cathedral for the generous gift of £1,000 in the early part of the year.

Then later in the month of July, Miss Violet Wills gave us £1,000. To Miss Wills we owe a great debt of gratitude for all the kindly interest she has taken in our Parish. We are delighted to know that she is to lay the Foundation Stone and that she promises to give further assistance in our efforts to build the Church.

(A late addition to the plans was the tower, allegedly because Miss (later Dame) Violet Wills felt that the Church was incomplete without one)

We received through the good offices of the Lord Bishop of the Diocese £1,500 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

The figure for the Building Fund now stood at £9,000 and we decided it was time to begin. (As promised Miss Wills laid the Foundation Stone, with the assistance of the Bishop of Exeter, The work of building the Church has been entrusted to Mr. Wm. Brealy of Exeter, and by the time this book is in the hand of our readers, the outlines of the new building will be seen to advantage, and we can promise our people a very fine Church to accommodate between 500 and 600 people. We pray God that He will abundantly bless the work whereunto we have now set our hands,

and that there may never be found wanting in this place a congregation of men and women whose hearts God has touched.

The above history is probably very incomplete, and no doubt some of our old parishioners will remember matters which have escaped the memory of those who have written these notes.

We would, in closing, wish to remember those workers, but who, alas! have passed over, who laboured so well towards the result of our present efforts, and we would like to pay a well-earned tribute to our present splendid body of workers for the great efforts they have put forward in recent years."

Laying of Foundation Stone

Construction of the new church began in August 1935 and the ceremony to lay the foundation stone took place on Wednesday, 27th November, 1935. There was a large number of dignitaries in attendance with the Bishop (Lord William Cecil), the Archdeacon of Exeter (the Ven. A. H. Thompson) and the Rev. J. H. Freeman taking part in the opening proceedings. The architect (Mr. E. F. Hooper) presented Miss Violet Wills with a silver trowel. His lordship placed in position, beneath the stone, a Bible enclosed in a teakwood case, and with Scriptural passages inscribed on the fly leaf, above the names of the Bishop, the Vicar and Miss Wills. With it was also placed a large sealed glass cylinder, containing copies of the parish magazine, the form of service used at the ceremony, and a souvenir brochure.

The Bishop having blessed the stone, Miss Wills declared it " Well and truly laid to the glory of God."



Miss Violet Wills with Rev. John H. Freeman on the day of the laying of the Foundation Stone. The young girl is Claire Freeman.

Miss Violet Wills

Miss Violet Edith Wills was the daughter of Sir Edward Payson Wills, 1st Baronet Wills, of Hazelwood, Stoke-Bishop, Bristol. The Wills family manufactured tobacco and for many years traded under the famous name of W.D. & H.O. Wills, later Imperial Tobacco. Sir Edward died in 1910 leaving an estate valued in excess of £2,500,000 with his daughter Violet being a beneficiary. Miss Wills was extremely philanthropic throughout her life and used her wealth to help many charitable causes and particularly churches. By the time St Mark's was completed the newly ennobled Dame Violet Wills had generously contributed around £9,000. Other benefactors purchased fittings that were donated to the church, many in memory of late loved ones.

Consecration of New Church

The new St Mark's was completed in 1937 and was consecrated by the new Lord Bishop of Exeter, Right Reverend Charles Edward Curzon, on Saturday, 9th October 1937 at 3:30pm. His predecessor, and Rev. John H. Freeman's mentor and friend, Lord William Cecil, died on 23rd June 1936, aged 73, not having seen the completion of St Mark's but his confidence in appointing Freeman only a few years earlier had been justified. This was the first new church to have been constructed in Exeter for almost 40 years and was the first church to be consecrated by the new bishop. In the press reports of the ceremony Rev. John H. Freeman was lauded as having been an inspiration to his flock since his arrival in Exeter.

The following photographs show some of the proceedings of the day.



The congregation processed from the old, temporary church in Manston Road to their new church, led by the Mothers' Union and Choir.



The Bishop's party made its way from the east end of the church past an honorary guard formed by the Scouts from the church Scout Group.



Rev. John H. Freeman met the Bishop and his party at the gates of the church, before processing into the church for the consecration service.



St Mark's Church, Exeter, 1937

For the first few years of his incumbency in Exeter Freeman was extremely busy with the task of organising fundraising for the new church building but he also put great effort into the pastoral care of his parishioners and he supported youth groups in St Mark's. His signature appears on the 1935 Scout Group Registration form for the newly-formed 21st Exeter (St Mark's) Group - see Appendix A. Scouts from the group formed the guard of honour for church and civil dignitaries attending the consecration of the new church in 1937. Freeman was involved in many aspects of life around the city of Exeter and he was reported as having presented certificates to students in a local college following examination results and gave the students an inspirational address on their importance to society as they went out to make their way in the world. He was also involved in many of the civic activities in the city in his role as Chaplain to the Mayor.

The Freeman family was again blessed with another child in 1936 with the birth of their second daughter, Patricia.

Freeman's love of music was again to the fore at St Mark's as it had been in other locations and a newspaper article in February 1936 read;

VICAR'S "CHOIR" PRACTICE

To increase his congregation's knowledge of hymns, the Rev. J. H. Freeman, Vicar of St. Mark's, Exeter, is to conduct congregational practices in church before Sunday evening services.

The Bishop of Exeter's Bicycle

The last occasion that the Lord Bishop Cecil had visited St Mark's was in February 1936 and as he left the church he asked Freeman if his bicycle would be of use to him, who thanked him for the offer. Cecil was well known for cycling around the city of Exeter and on his death later that year after more than 20 years as Bishop the bicycle was bequeathed to Freeman who found it to be a great help in his parochial duties. He undoubtedly used the bicycle to commute between St Mark's vicarage, at 13, Mont le Grand, Exeter, and St Mark's church, a 15 minute walk away in Pinhoe Road, Exeter.

Freeman continued to be actively involved in civic activities in the city of Exeter and in the pastoral care of its people. In July 1938 he led a service following the parade of 1,500 ambulance workers, presided over by the Mayor of Exeter. The following July, on the eve of war, he conducted a service in a circus tent with a gathering of approximately 2,000 people. However life was about to change for everyone in Britain and Freeman's ministry was to take an unexpected and significant change of direction.

War Looms

In the years immediately before and during the time that the new St Mark's was being built it was clear that there was great unrest in Germany, leading to the rise of the Nazi Party lead by Adolf Hitler. Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and in a few short years he had absolute power in the country. The spectre of hostilities in Europe loomed large as the decade neared its end and in September 1939 war was declared when Germany invaded its neighbour Poland. Freeman could never have anticipated that he and his family would be affected by the war in Europe but as time passed and it became a world war Britain was now in danger of being invaded as Hitler's plans for conquest became fully apparent. The Battle of Britain raged in the skies over the south of England in 1940 and the Royal Air Force successfully prevented the German Luftwaffe from gaining the air superiority needed for an invasion. For the time being an assault on the shores of Britain by German ground forces was averted.

(Freeman's family had some military connections as his older brother William Thomas had enlisted in the Canadian army near the end of World War 1 and his younger brother Richard George was a surgeon in the R.A.F. Medical Service when World War 2 began.)

Freeman was an inspirational figure as he had shown throughout his time in Exeter, especially with regard to the fundraising campaign he led for the building of the new church. His qualities of leadership, his strength of character and indeed his charisma were needed more than ever as the hardships of war became to take effect. In a church parade involving the company of the Exeter Battalion of the Home Guard the text "The battle is not ours, but God's," was used in an inspirational sermon given by him in St Mark's on Sunday, 27 October 1940.

From a news report in a local newspaper;

The Vicar said the words of the text steeled the hearts of the men to whom they were first addressed when they were spoken many hundreds of years ago, at a time similar to our own in these days of war. He wanted the Home Guard to remember the words in the watches of the night, in the tasks and, perhaps, the perils that lie ahead, when they might be called upon to guard this land, the homes of the people, the lives of women and children, at the cost of much sacrifice. Unless we believed the words of the text they could not fight. They must prove to themselves, to their enemies, and to God that this ancient people was at least still worthy to live, for it was ready to die.

"We are not seeking revenge or glory or gain in this war." continued the Vicar "We never planned it. We are not a military people. We do not organise ourselves for conquest. Our enemies reproach us for the very qualities we honour in men and in States. Their God is not our God. Their philosophy is that force is its own justification, that what has the power has the permission, that weakness has no rights, and that Christianity was a religion for slaves. Our enemies have challenged the moral order, and we must answer that challenge."

The war rapidly escalated as German forces attacked and invaded more European countries. The bombing raids carried out by the Luftwaffe in 1941, known as the Blitz, targeted many strategic targets in British cities, and especially London where great loss of life and damage was sustained. By mid-1941 this bombing campaign subsided as German resources were switched to the invasion of the Soviet Union. A new improved British bombing offensive began in the Spring of 1942 and the city of Lübeck, on Germany's Baltic coast, was targeted and virtually destroyed on 28 March 1942, with over 300 people being killed. Hitler was outraged and ordered retaliation, targeting towns and cities in Britain that were culturally, but not militarily, important with the intention of demoralising the population. Targets were chosen from a popular German tourist guide for Britain known as the Baedeker Guide. The raids became known as the 'Baedeker Raids' and historic cities such as Bath, York, Canterbury, Norwich and Exeter were some of those selected for destruction.

Exeter is Bombed

The first such raid was directed against Exeter and took place on the night 23/24 April 1942. This raid caused only slight damage but a second raid the following evening resulted in more than 80 fatalities. Later raids in April targeted other English cities causing many more casualties but on the night of 3/4 May the Luftwaffe returned to Exeter causing great damage to the historic city centre and in particular the cathedral where St James' Chapel was completely destroyed and the south Quire Aisle suffered considerable damage. Tragically 156 people died in this attack and over 550 were injured.

A mass funeral for many of the dead was held in the Higher Cemetery in Exeter on Friday, 8th May and Rev. John H. Freeman took part in the funeral service that was attended by many clergy and dignitaries from the city and the county of Devon. The Bishop of Exeter performed the Anglican committal.

It is known that the death of so many people from Exeter, some of them his own parishioners, together with the terrible damage sustained by the city had a profound effect on Freeman.

A section of the post-1942 history of St Mark's reads as follows;

"The Parish of St Mark's was severely affected, many parishioners being killed or injured. Our beloved Church however escaped with only slight damage and as a result was able to help the parishes of St James and St Sidwells whose Churches had been completely destroyed.

Following this disaster the health of our Vicar, The Rev. Freeman, was so badly affected that he was obliged to relinquish the living."

Freeman and his family had undoubtedly narrowly escaped injury and even death in the bombing raids and it is likely that he himself instigated a move away from what he may have regarded as the front line. Only 3 months later, in August 1942, he accepted from the Bishop of Tuam the curacy-in-charge of St. Anne's, Easkey and left the extremely busy parish of St Mark's to take charge of a quiet, country parish on the coast of Co. Sligo.



Bomb damage to Exeter Cathedral - July 1942
(Image credit - Ursula Radford)



Re-building of Cathedral in 1946
(Image credit - Alan Down)

St Anne's Church, Easkey, Co. Sligo



St Anne's Church, Easkey

Rev. J.H. Freeman began his ministry in August 1942 and very quickly settled in to life in a small country parish in the west of Ireland, a contrast to the large parish he had left in Exeter. A short time after they arrived in Sligo their son Geoffrey was sent to a private boarding school in Whitechurch, south Dublin called St Columba's. This school was and still is affiliated to the Church of Ireland. Their elder daughter Claire was sent to the 'French School' in Bray, Co. Wicklow, where young protestant ladies from all over Ireland were educated. Patricia was home-schooled by her mother Olive.

Easkey church is located in the Diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry and initially he was the curate-in-charge of the Parish of Easkey. later in 1942 he became the Rector of Easkey and the adjoining Parish of Kilglass. Freeman assisted in the diocese in his role as Examining Chaplain to the Bishop, Rt Rev. Dr. John W. Crozier.

It is believed that he brought the Bishop's bicycle with him to Easkey which the Bishop, and later Freeman, had used regularly in their pastoral duties around Exeter. " I would not part with it for anything," declared Mr. Freeman as he

prepared to leave Exeter for the country of his birth and, perhaps importantly for him, one that was neutral in the war.

The Freeman family quickly settled in to life in Easkey and they were immediately welcomed by the local community. The youngest in the family, Pat (Patricia), recalls the wonderful life she led there as a six-year-old child and remembers that local farming families were extremely kind supplying them with home-grown produce, with one even giving them a donkey. They may not have had a pet in previous locations but only weeks after they arrived the following advertisement was seen in the Sligo Champion newspaper;

Sligo Champion - Saturday 26 September 1942

WANTED healthy Setter or Retriever Dog Puppy. - Freeman, Easkey, Sligo.

The continuing theme of church music was again to the fore in Freeman's ministry and he was mentioned in another newspaper article:

Sligo Champion - Saturday 24 June 1944

CHORAL FESTIVAL IN CALRY CHURCH, CALRY

The annual Festival of Choirs was held in Calry Parish Church on Wednesday at 3.30 p.m. when the united choirs of Calry, St John's, Drumcliffe, Lissadell, Manorhamilton, Ballymote, Riverstown, Dromahaire, Killinumery and Killarge joined together to render a fine chorale service under the direction of the organist, Mr. F. H. Haywood. Expressive renderings were given of the Anthem "Evening and Morning" by Sir H. Oakley, the service by Charles Wood and Psalm 104 to chants by Atkins and Dix. The hymns were taken from the Church Hymnal, and the service fully intoned and led by Canon McCombe, Rector of Ballymote. A large congregation attended, and the clergy present were the Rev. J. H. Freeman, B.A., Rector of Easkey, who delivered an impressive address on the subject of good and bad church music.

(Calry Parish Church is a large church located in the county town of Sligo and the other churches mentioned in this newspaper article are in the counties of Sligo or Leitrim. Easkey lies 43 km. west of Sligo town)

Freeman once again endeared himself to his parishioners and took an active part in community life. The local school connected with the parish was St Anne's National School and in his capacity as Chairman of the Board of Governors he was involved in its repair in September 1944. He was also involved in a local campaign to have a bridge built over a river at Lacknasleva near the coastal village of Enniscrone which was described as 'a positive danger to life.' He himself had to cross this river to visit parishioners and had in the past been soaked in the process. He described it as a deplorable and disgraceful case and in a letter he implored Sligo County Council to take action. A bridge was eventually built.

The Freeman family had lived in the Rathmines area of south Dublin for many years but in the 1920s Rev. John H. Freeman's mother Margaret, now widowed, had moved, with a number of her daughters, to the St Nessan's area of Howth, a much more affluent area of County Dublin, some 20 km. from the city of Dublin. She would have joined the nearby St Mary's Church in Howth where her daughter Aileen was married in September 1926. In January 1945 Margaret Freeman died and was buried in the Protestant section of St Fintan's Cemetery in Howth.

The local Sligo newspaper published the following sympathy notice;

Sligo Champion - Saturday 03 February 1945

Sympathy—We desire to offer our sincere sympathy to the Rev. Mr. Freeman, M.A., Rector, Easkey, on the death of his mother which occurred in a Dublin Hospital during the week.

The Belfast Blitz

In the Luftwaffe raids on Belfast in the spring of 1941 great damage had been caused across the city in what became known as the Belfast Blitz. Many churches in the city were badly damaged or completely destroyed. A number of Church of Ireland churches were affected and as World War II came to an end in Europe in May 1945 the government authorities looked to making good the damage done. One church that was almost completely destroyed was St James's on the junction of the Cliftonville and Antrim Roads in the north of the city, having been hit by bombs on 15 April 1941. It sustained two direct hits causing great damage. Originally built in 1870 the only part of the building left intact was the bell tower so an almost total rebuilt was required. The Venerable Paul W. N. Shirley, Archdeacon of Connor, was the Rector of St James's at the time of the bombing and he and some resourceful parishioners managed to convert the parochial hall into a temporary church and using salvaged ecclesiastical furniture that included the Holy Table, the reredos and prayer desks it was ready for its first service on 13 July 1941. That same month the Archdeacon, at the age of 72 (born on 12 July 1869 in Carlow), announced that he would be retiring from active ministry in September. He had been Rector at St James's for more than 20 years. Rev. Eric S. Barber succeeded Shirley as Rector in December 1941 until he was instituted as Rector of the parish of Holywood in September 1945.

A new Rector was now needed to lead the rebuilding project for the church and given Rev. John H. Freeman's prior experience of managing a large church-building project in Exeter it is likely that he was approached to take on the considerable task of rebuilding St James's in north Belfast, made more difficult by reason of the major damage sustained by homes and businesses in the area needing to be funded as a priority.

At a meeting of the Board of Nomination for the parish of St. James, Belfast, held on 5 October 1945 in the Diocesan Rooms, Belfast, the Bishop of Connor presiding, Rev. John Horace Freeman, M.A., was unanimously appointed incumbent of St. James's, in succession to Rev. E. S. Barber, M.A., who was recently appointed to the parish of Holywood. Freeman's last service in Easkey was held on 25 November 1945 and was attended by Rt Rev. Dr Crozier, Bishop of Tuam, who dedicated a stained glass window in the chancel and a carved oak communion table. It was reported that during his stay in Sligo he was very popular and his departure was regretted by all. He moved to the familiar city of Belfast in Northern Ireland once again and he was instituted as Rector of St James's on 7 December 1945 by the Lord Bishop of Connor, the Rt, Rev. Charles King Irwin. D.D.



Interior of St Anne's Church, Easkey

St James's Church, Belfast



St James's Church, Cliftonville/Antrim Road, Belfast

Many areas of the United Kingdom were attacked and bombed early in World War 2 and in 1941 the War Damage Commission was set up by the British government to pay compensation for war damage to buildings and land. However it did not take responsibility for the repairs themselves, leaving that to local authorities or private contractors. The commission had its headquarters in London and operated out of 16 regional offices. Region 13 dealt with Northern Ireland and was based in Belfast and it would have been to this office that a claim for compensation would have been submitted following the almost total destruction of St James's.

Freeman arrived in St James's only months after the end of the war and on seeing the damage to the church it would have been a stark reminder of his time in Exeter where he had witnessed at first hand the dreadful damage done during air raids. Like Exeter there had been a high death toll and as he settled in to parish duties he would have encountered many in the area who had lost loved ones in the Belfast Blitz. Some of those killed or badly injured would have been parishioners of St James's church and the pastoral care of affected families would have been difficult. The process of rebuilding the church ran in parallel with looking after his congregation but as he had proven in Exeter he would be well equipped for the work needed. He had exceptional organisational skills and would have been very persuasive when it came to getting people to assist with this task. In the first few years of his ministry he kept the church running as normally as possible, working hard in the background to bring the rebuilding of the church closer. Negotiations were carried out with the War Damage Commission regarding how the church should be rebuilt and no doubt the ever resourceful Freeman was able to convince them that it should be built with stone in keeping with the remaining bell tower.

Rebuilding of St James's Church and Death of Mrs Olive Freeman

Eventually planning permission was granted, funding was in place and plans drawn up so reconstruction could begin, and on 17th June 1950 the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone took place, performed by Mrs Irwin, the wife of the Bishop of Connor, the Rt, Rev. Charles King Irwin. D.D., who presided and blessed the foundation stone. Freeman himself could not attend due to illness but watched the proceedings from his bedroom window in the adjoining rectory. His wife Olive did attend the ceremony although her health was deteriorating and only 2 months later she died of cancer in St James's Rectory at the age of 50. She was buried with her father and two of her siblings, Douglas (died in 1906 aged 1 month) and Maud (died in 1933 aged 21 years) in Bangor Cemetery.

When his wife died Freeman had the added responsibility of caring for his three children as well as the running of a busy parish and overseeing the rebuilding of his church. When Olive Freeman died Geoffrey was 20 years old, Claire was 17 years old and Patricia was 14 years old. Both girls were pupils at Ashleigh House School on the Lisburn Road, Belfast. Geoffrey then joined the Royal Navy, training in England to be a radio officer. At the age of 53 these responsibilities no doubt began to bear heavily on Freeman and with having been quite ill it is likely that he sought a quieter parish where he could recuperate. His daughter Patricia became a boarder in Ashfield House for three terms following her mother's death.

Kilbride Parish Church



Kilbride Parish Church (St Bride's)

Rev. John Redmond retired from active ministry in Kilbride in October 1951, preaching his farewell sermon at the harvest service in the church on 30 September 1951. He had been in the ministry for 52 years and in St Bride's since 1929. This left a vacancy in the parish which was quickly filled with the nomination of Rev. John H. Freeman on 10 October 1951.



INSTITUTION OF THE REV. J. H. FREEMAN TO THE PARISH OF KILBRIDE—Clergy who took part in Saturday's service at Doagh, Co. Antrim. From left: Mr. G. Clements (rector's churchwarden), the Rev. Chancellor R. S. Breene, the Rev. J. H. Freeman, the Lord Bishop of Connor (Dr. Charles King Irwin), the Rev. A. W. Scott, the Ven. Archdeacon J. R. Macdonald and Mr. J. Higgins (people's churchwarden).

Rev. J.H. Freeman's Institution in Kilbride

Rev. John H. Freeman was instituted to the incumbency of Kilbride on Saturday, 10th November by the Lord Bishop of Connor (Dr Charles King Irwin) and led the Service of Remembrance in St Bride's the following day.

The Freeman family moved from the busy parish of St James in Belfast to the quiet country parish of Kilbride and the smaller church of St Bride's near Doagh. When his daughter Patricia came to live in Kilbride rectory she had returned to day attendance at Ashleigh House once again. She boarded the bus to Belfast in Doagh village, making the journey into the city centre, before taking a second bus to the school on the Lisburn Road. Ashleigh House School amalgamated with Princess Gardens School in 1987 to become Hunterhouse College, an all-girls' grammar school.

During Freeman's short ministry in Kilbride he officiated at only one marriage, that of a local couple, John Thompson and Mary Fisher, on 15th February 1952. Only a few days before his own sudden death Freeman officiated at the funeral of Mr Thomas Elder, who for 45 years was postmaster in Ballyclare and a parishioner in St John's, Ballyclare, and who had died suddenly in mid-July.

An account of Rev. John H. Freeman's death was given by Rev. Wallace Fenton, a parishioner in Kilbride at the time, then aged 19.

On 22nd July 1952 Rev. Freeman was on a pastoral visit to a parishioner who lived in one of a number of farm labourer cottages on the Fisherwick estate in Doagh known as the Kennel Cottages. These cottages was accessed using a rough lane on the northern side of Fisherwick, the lane went past a gate lodge on what is now the Mill Road and is approximately half a mile from the church. It is reasonably certain that he stopped his car on the lane near the house, got out, put his foot on the bank of the hedge, slumped to the ground and died at the scene.

The gate lodge has since been demolished and replaced by a bungalow built on the site and access to the lane behind is no longer possible. The only evidence of the cottages still visible is their window sills forming part of a field boundary. The cottages were only a short distance of 200 metres across a field from the Rectory. They once housed the hunting dogs for the East Antrim Hunt based at the Fisherwick estate when it was owned by Lord Donegall, but were later converted to living accommodation.



Lane leading to the Kennel Cottages

Freeman's sudden and untimely death left his three children to take care of themselves in Kilbride rectory for a short time until alternative accommodation was found. Mr George Clements, who was the Rector's churchwarden, was extremely helpful during what was a very difficult time. George Clements was a farmer who lived in Ballyhamage House which some years before had been the residence of two previous rectors of Kilbride, namely George Henry McDowell Johnston, M.A. (1814 - 1864) and his nephew, Francis Charles Young, M.A. (1864 - 1886).

Geoffrey, now aged 21, looked after his father's funeral arrangements. His mother, Olive Freeman, had been interred in the Madden family grave in Bangor just over 2 years earlier and initially arrangements were made for her husband to be buried there too. However the grave was deemed to be at its capacity and Geoffrey had to make the decision that his father should be buried with his own mother, Margaret, in St Fintan's Cemetery, Howth, Co. Dublin. He was interred on 25 July, 1952.

Harriett Madden, Freeman's mother-in-law, assisted the young family with the purchase of a house in Waterloo Gardens off the Antrim Road in Belfast.

Rev. F. George Guy

During his incumbency in St James's Freeman had a curate assistant called Rev. Francis George Guy between 1947 and 1949. Guy, originally from Queen's Co., now Co. Laois, had been a Chaplain to the Forces during World War 2. On 24th November, 1949 he was instituted incumbent of Dunluce Parish Church in Bushmills where he remained for 33 years, until his retirement in 1982. He died at the age of 84 years on 15th March 1995 and was interred with his first wife Avril Foxall Guy (née Williamson) in the adjoining churchyard.

Freeman and Guy had worked very closely together in St James's, becoming good friends and following Freeman's death Guy conducted a memorial service in St Bride's on Sunday, 3rd August, 1952. In his address Mr. Guy said "*Mr. Freeman's was a life dedicated to service, and those who knew him knew that he gave himself utterly to his calling, and he was ever mindful of the high dignity of the office to which he was called... a watchman, a messenger and steward to his Lord. He manifested to a remarkable degree a very great feeling for his fellow man, a feeling which flowed from him in an ever-broadening stream. He walked humbly with his God: no one had a more simple yet sublime faith. Religion, to him, was no formal thing, but something real and deep-rooted. His place was secure among those who had fought the good fight. A tribute to him for all he had done for them would be to dedicate themselves, souls and bodies, to forward the same principles at he had, simplicity, goodness and devotion to duty.*"



Rev. Canon F. George Guy

Appointment of Rev. T.J. Gray

At a meeting of the Board of Nomination for the Diocese of Connor, held only a few weeks later on 29th August 1952 in the Diocesan Rooms, Belfast, Rev. Thomas John Gray was appointed incumbent of the Parish of Kilbride (Doagh) in succession to the late Rev. J. H Freeman.

Other Freeman Family Members

William Thomas Freeman - brother

William Freeman was John's eldest surviving brother. Born in 1887 he was 19 years older than John and in the early part of the 20th century he emigrated to Toronto in Canada. He had served in the Canadian army for a period before the outbreak of war in 1914 and re-enlisted in September 1917, taking the rank of sergeant in the Canadian Army Service Corps. He was discharged again in April 1919 never having served abroad. He had been an insurance agent before enlisting. He died unmarried in Toronto.

Richard George Freeman - brother

Richard Freeman was 5 years younger than John and moved to England to begin a career as a doctor in the Royal Air Force Medical Service. He later became an RAF surgeon. He died in Lewes, Sussex, England in 1967.

Geoffrey John Freeman - son

Born in Exeter in 1930, he was educated in Exeter and on the family's return to the Republic of Ireland in 1942, he boarded in St Columba's College in Dublin before joining the Royal Navy as a radio officer. He later joined the Grimaldi Shipping Line based in Italy. Geoffrey taught English at Bandon Grammar school, Co. Cork from 1987-1992 before going to live in Rathlee, Co. Sligo for about 10 years prior to moving to a cottage in Ballina, Co. Mayo and died unmarried in Sligo in 2019. His ashes were interred in his mother's family grave in Bangor.

Claire Margaret Gordon (née Freeman) - daughter

Claire was born in Belfast in 1933 and was educated initially in Exeter, before becoming a boarder in The French School in Bray when the family moved to Sligo. When the family moved back to Belfast she attended Ashleigh House School in Belfast. She married James Gordon, a veterinary surgeon from Stormont, in St Peter's Parish Church in Belfast in 1958. Rev. Dr R.S. Breen officiated, assisted by Rev. F. George Guy. Claire and James had two sons. She died in Newtownards in 2019.

Patricia Jolly (née Freeman) - daughter

Pat was born in Exeter in 1936 and like her brother and sister she was educated initially in Exeter, then home-schooled by her mother in Easkey, and on the family's return to Belfast she attended Ashleigh House School. She is married to Iain and lives in England.

Photographs



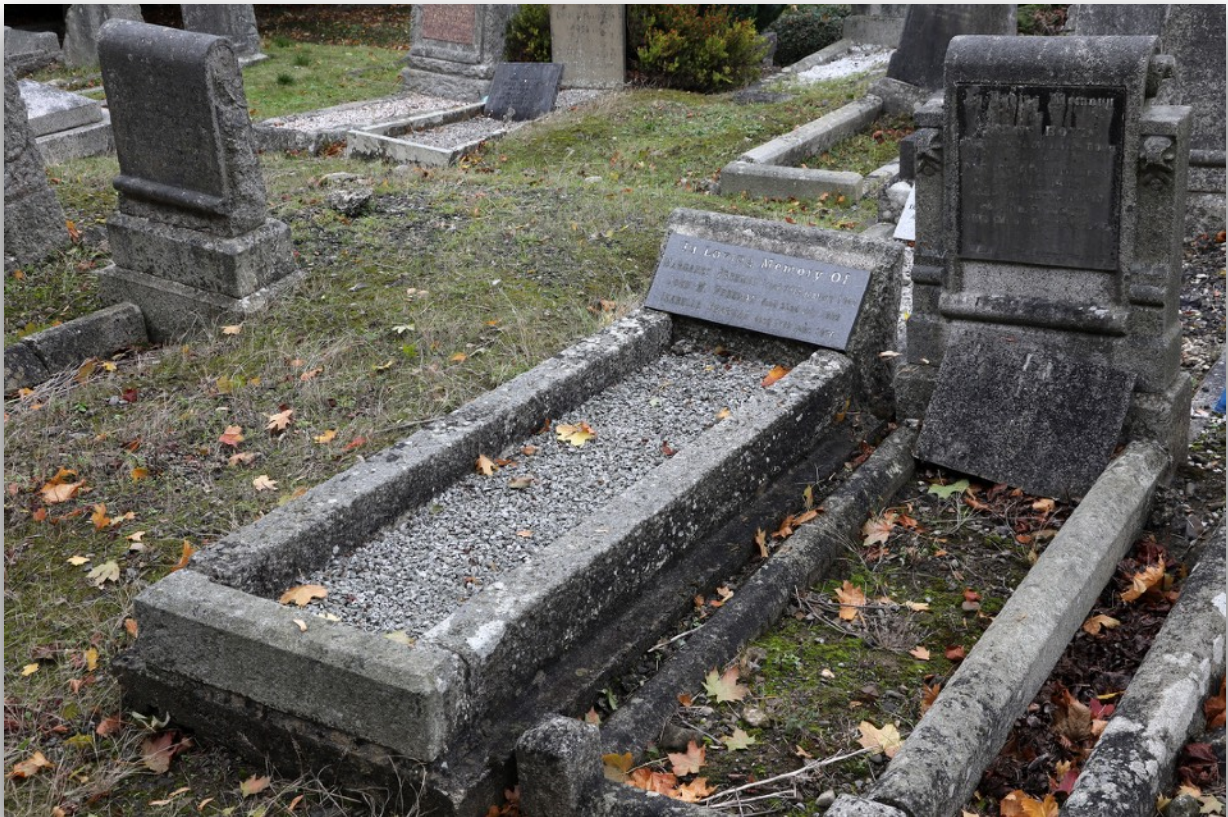
Olive Mary Freeman's Grave in Bangor



Madden Family Grave in Bangor



Rev. John H. Freeman's Grave in St Fintan's Cemetery, Howth



Freeman Family Grave in St Fintan's Cemetery, Howth

Rev. John H. Freeman

Chronology

14th December 1896	Birth - Rathfarnham, Dublin
31st March 1901	Residence - Rathmines, Dublin
2nd April 1911	Residence - Rathmines, Dublin
c. 1918 - 1922	Education - Trinity College, Dublin
25th March 1924	Ordination - deacon
25th March 1924	Curate in Bangor Parish Church
1925 - 1929	Curate and Dean's Vicar, St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast
14th September 1927	Marriage to Olive Madden, St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast
1929 - 1932	Priest Vicar in Exeter Cathedral
1932 - 1934	Rector of St Mark's Parish, Ballysillan
1934 - 1942	Vicar of St Mark's Parish, Exeter
1942 - 1945	Curate-in-Charge/Rector of Easkey Parish, Co. Sligo
1945 - 1951	Rector of St James's Parish, Belfast
1951 - 1952	Rector of Kilbride Parish, Doagh, Ballyclare
22nd July 1952	Death in Doagh, Ballyclare

Acknowledgements

Patricia Jolly, daughter of Rev. John H. Freeman
Barry Niblock, Bangor Parish Church, Co. Down
Ellie Jones, Exeter Cathedral Archivist, Exeter, Devonshire
Jim Patterson, Churchwarden, St Mark's Parish Church, Ballysillan, Belfast
Raymond Flack, St Mark's Parish Church, Exeter, Devonshire
Rev. Canon David Humphries, Kilbride Parish Church, Co. Antrim
Rev. Karen Duignan, St Anne's Church, Parish of Easkey, Co. Sligo
Rev. George Graham, Dunluce Parish Church, Bushmills, Co. Antrim
Archivist, The Scout Association, Gilwell Park, Chingford, London

FORM C.

THE BOY SCOUTS ASSOCIATION.

SCOUT GROUP REGISTRATION.

10M/3/35
THE BOY SCOUTS ASSOCIATION,
IMPERIAL HEADQUARTERS
14 NOV 1935
No. 35741
25, BUCKINGHAM PALACE RD.
LONDON, S.W. 1.

County DEVON Commissioner's District No. 1 (Exeter)

Local Association Exeter.

Instructions :- THREE COPIES OF this form should be completed and sent to the Hon. Secretary of the Local Association who will forward them through the District Commissioner to Imperial Headquarters. The Group will then be registered at Imperial Headquarters until the following 30th September, and notification will be sent to the Officer concerned through the Secretary of the Local Association. One Copy of the form will be retained by Imperial Headquarters, the second sent to the County Secretary and the third to Hon. Secretary of the Local Association.

Name of Group in full 21st. Exeter (St. Mark's) Scouts

Address of Group Headquarters Church Room, Manston Road, Exeter.

(1). Is the Group "Open" or "Controlled" by some Church, School or Organisation (see Rule 179)? Controlled.

(2). If "Controlled", by whom? the Vicar of St. Marks Parish, Exeter.

(3) Signature of Controlling authority (see ★ below) J. S. Reynolds (Vicar).

Proposed Officers.

Rank.	Name.	Address.
Group S. M. Cubmaster A. C. M.	<u>ROBERTS Frederick Charles</u>	<u>7, Regents Park Road, Exeter.</u>
Scoutmaster A. S. M.	<u>TRASK Norman George</u> <u>CLEMENTS Douglas James</u>	<u>90 3, St Sidwells Cottages, Sidwell St., Exeter</u> <u>118 Park Road, Exeter</u>
Rover Sct Ldr A. R. S. L.		

Enter in this space, which, if any, of the following applies to Group:-
Works Group, Deaf, Blind or otherwise disabled Scouts, Home, Orphanage, School. If School, state type - Elementary, Secondary, etc.

Number of Officers in Group 3
Number of Wolf Cubs 12
Scouts 15
Sea Scouts _____
Rover Scouts _____
Rover Sea Scouts _____

Signed F. C. Roberts. Group S.M.
(or officer in charge.)

Recommended by Exeter Local Association.

J. S. Reynolds. Hon. Secretary.

Approved by [Signature] District Commissioner.

No. 1 (Exeter) District.

Date 13. xi. 35

FOR IMPERIAL HEADQUARTERS USE ONLY.

14 NOV. 1935

25, BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD
LONDON, S.W. 1.

Registered No. of Group 14524
Please quote this number in all correspondence.

Total all Ranks 30

★ In the case of the Church of England, the Controlling Authority must be the incumbent or some individual appointed by him.