

Extracts from “Anglicans in Germany” by Paul W Schniewind

1840 - 1880

In 1840 the population of the Prussian capital Berlin was 322,000 (London: 1821: 1,200,000 population). The English had commenced to settle in the Prussian capital and the need of a chaplaincy was felt. The Chaplaincy for the Prussian Dominions was established in Berlin in 1842, the year the Revd Robert Bellson came to Berlin. He was supported by the Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews.

At the request of the British Ambassador, the Earl of Westmoreland, and with the sanction of the Bishop of London, Bellson began holding services in a room in the British Legation, subsequently conducting them in the hall at the back of the Hotel du Nord, Unter-den-Linden.

In 1854, with the help of Lord Bloomfield, the successor of the Earl of Westmoreland, the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, granted a room in the front part of Monbijou Palace for the use of the English congregation. There was accommodation for about 120. In a few years the congregation so greatly increased, that it was felt desirable that a church should be built on a site nearer, if possible, to the English quarter of the city. When Mr Bellson left Berlin in 1880, having served there for 38 years, the patronage went on 25 June 1880 to the SPG.

In 1871 Berlin became the capital of Germany (Reichshauptstadt). The population grew to 1,315,000 in 1880.

The SPG appointed in 1880 the Revd Robert Brisco Earée chaplain, under the licence of the Bishop of London. The accommodation provided for services was inadequate for the increasing congregation. In January 1883, chaplain Earée seized the occasion of the silver wedding of the Crown Princess Victoria of Germany – the Princess Royal of Great Britain and Ireland – for setting up a building fund for the building of a permanent church as a memorial of the anniversary. In addition to the committee in Berlin, a fund raising committee was formed in London at the suggestion of the Crown Princess. The site for the church was placed at disposal by the German Emperor, through the intervention of HRH the Prince of Wales, in the palace gardens of Monbijou Palace. The larger part of the funds required – £7,000 – was obtained through the efforts of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII). On 18 July 1883 a magnificent fête was organized at the Fisheries’ Exhibition, London, lent for the occasion by the director as a personal favour to the Prince of Wales. The proceeds for the building fund totalled £4,500. Eventually the total raised in the amount of £7,400 was handed over to the Crown Princess for building the church while £1,450 was entrusted to the trustees as the nucleus of the Endowment Fund. The church was designed by the court architect, Professor Raschdorf, under the instruction of the Crown Princess. At her wish, he spent some time in England, for the purpose of studying English church architecture, before designing the new church in Berlin. The Crown Princess took pain in supervising and, where necessary, modifying the details.

On 24 May 1884, the birthday of Queen Victoria, the foundation stone was laid. The church was dedicated to St George, England’s patron saint. On 13 November 1885 St George’s Church was

handed over (not given) by royal deed by the Crown Princess “at the disposal of the Anglican Community in Berlin”.

At the request of the Crown Princess the patronage went in 1885 from the SPG to the Bishop of London.

On 21 November 1885, the birthday of the Crown Princess, St George’s Church was consecrated by the Rt Revd Bishop Titcomb, Coadjutor-Bishop for Northern and Central Europe. The clergy assisting at the service: R B Earée, Chaplain, J S Gilderdale from Dresden, A White from Baden-Baden, W Price from Memel, W Hechler from Vienna, C F Weidemann from Hamburg and two clergymen from England.

A touching incident is reported at the conclusion of the service. As the Chaplain was leaving the chancel, the Crown Prince Friedrich III went forward and took him by the hand, placing his other hand on his shoulder – a silent yet eloquent testimony to Mr Earée’s efforts.

The Rules for the Government and Management of the Church of St George, Berlin read:

“Conditions of Membership: to be a Member of the Anglican Community a person must

- a) be 21 years of age
- b) be a Member of a Protestant Episcopal Church in Her Britannic Majesty’s Dominions or in the United States of America
- c) have paid for a seat in the Church for a full year, including the current quarters
- d) reside within 30 kilometres of St George’s Church
- e) every person fulfilling these conditions can claim to be entered on the Roll as a Member of the Community.

Berlin, November 13, 1885”

It seemed that the new church at Montbijou Garden could only be reached after a journey taking up to an hour. The church was built to accommodate 295 worshippers. While Berlin was growing with gigantic strides, and seeing that the church was built for all time as the one place of worship for English and American Episcopalians, accommodation for 500 would have been a wiser foresight.

Bishop Wilkinson, who had already had an audience with the Crown Princess in 1883, recorded in 1886 in the Vestry Book at his first visit as Bishop after the death of Bishop Titcomb:

[...] I find a beautiful building, admirable in design, showing the best possible workmanship, carefully and lovingly furnished in almost every particular; a very large congregation of English and Americans attending its services, a good proportion of Communicants, the Crown Princess and Princesses attending most regularly every Sunday evening and taking the warmest interest in every matter concerning the Church, the Crown Prince sometimes attending also. The English and American residents seem drawn so much more closely together, each and all evincing evident interest in the welfare and progress of the Church. The Chaplain, it seems to me, has done and is doing a very valuable work here.

On the occasion of the Queen's 50th Jubilee on 21 June 1887 special services were held everywhere. On Saturday before Jubilee Day, a treat was given to children of the English families. The children, together with their parents, were taken by special train to Hoppegarten, the German Newmarket, where the race-course had been lent to them for a play-ground. Here they had dinner etc. The band of the 2nd Foot Guard played English music in the pavilion of the race-course. The Emperor, Wilhelm I, who had desired to be present, was not well enough to attend the festival service.

Outlying districts

In November 1887 arrangements were commenced for providing the services of an assistant chaplain for the outlying districts of Niederschöneide, Rummelsburg and Hoppegarten.

At the two former places were cloth factories with many Yorkshire employees, while at Hoppegarten were large training establishments for race-horses, presided over by Englishmen, and quite a colony of English jockeys, stablemen etc.

The Revd Herbert E Egremont was appointed by the SPG as the first Assistant Chaplain.

Unfortunately, the scheme of assistant ministrations did not work well. At the end of 1887 Bishop Wilkinson noted after visiting Schöneide: "they appeared to me to be dissenters, and not to want me. Little came of the effort I made for them." In April 1888 Bishop Wilkinson preached twice at Schöneide and Rummelsburg to factory people. In 1889 in London Revd T Teignmouth-Shore and others, on the CCCS [Colonial and Continental Church Society] council committee, resigned, owing to a rebellion on the part of some moneyed Low church supporters against "Catholic Evangelicalism". On the departure of the third Assistant Chaplain, Mr B G Durrad, in 1890 the SPG declined to send another.

Visit of the Queen in 1888

On 23 April 1888 St George's Church was visited by Queen Victoria, whose signature was written in the Vestry Book with many other royal autographs.

A few months later the Emperor Friedrich III, after his too short reign of but 99 days, died on 15 June 1888. On 18 June, the day of the funeral, a Memorial Service was held at St George's and an address of condolence was presented to the Empress by the British and American members of the congregation.

The death of the Emperor prevented the idea of building a parsonage in the Montbijou Garden, although the subject was discussed by Bishop Wilkinson with the new Emperor Wilhelm II in an interview during the next visit after the death of Friedrich III.

1890 - 1895

In 1890 Mr Earée resigned. The ten years during which he had been in Berlin was a period of literally "royal" progress in the history of the Berlin chaplaincy. In 1880 the number of communicants was 187, in 1889, 2,023.

With the consent of the Bishop of London, Earée exchanged with the Revd Frank Owen, Rector of Miserden, Gloucestershire. Mr Owen commenced his duties in March 1890 and had charge of the chaplaincy until October 1895. This period was poorly chronicled. Bishop Wilkinson paid his official visit each year, with the exception of 1882.

1895 - 1910

In 1895 Bishop Wilkinson had talks in Berlin with the Ambassador Sir Edward Malet and advised a new appointment which was duly effected. In October 1895 the Revd James Henry Fry left Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, and took over the Berlin chaplaincy. Fry described the ritual at St George's as "very simple" and added "at present, it is not being thought wise to make sudden changes." However, he changed the services at once to have the early Celebration every Sunday and Holy day, instead of only once a month, fixing the late celebration of Holy Communion for the first and third Sundays, instead of the three Sundays in the month. In addition, Matins and Litany were held every Friday at 11 a.m., and on Holy days Matins with sermon at the same hour.

Mr Fry was a tireless writer; his reports were more frequent than those of any other chaplaincy in Germany at that time.

Before the end of 1895 Bishop Wilkinson came again to Berlin. He paid a visit to the "Governesses Home". This had been established in 1887 by the Crown Princess at 8 Göben Strasse. It was a place where unemployed British and American governesses could find cheap and good accommodation and assist them in seeking for new engagement. This Home was to serve as a central institution for all Germany. Wilkinson noted that 70 to 80 governesses were engaged in teaching by English residents in Berlin.

The records of St George's show an increase in attendance: on Christmas Day 1895, 76 communicated at the early service and 99 at midday; on Good Friday 1896 about 150 attended the Three Hours' Service (held for the first time in Berlin); and on Easter Day 1896 the communicants numbered 204.

In 1896 Mr Fry held Lenten services for the English at Hoppegarten and Niederschöneweide. At Hoppegarten the Lutheran Church was used on a Wednesday evening; the service at Schöneweide was held in a schoolroom.

A report from early 1896 states that although there was a resident American Pastor in Berlin, Dr Dickie, Minister of the American Chapel (undenominational), providing for the needs of sixteen nonconformist groups, American Episcopalians regarded St George's as their church and contributed largely to its support. Therefore the title "English Church" was dropped as much as possible. On the notice-board etc. it was reprinted with "St George's Church" only. There was at that time probably no other chaplaincy on the Continent where the interests of the Americans had more carefully been considered. The First Secretary of the American Embassy, Mr J B Jackson, was elected Chairman of the Church Committee on the departure of the previous Committee Chairman, Col Swaine.

Sunday offertories in 1896 amounted to 7,815 Marks, seat rents 5,302 Marks. Total receipts of St George's Church in the previous year had been 13,710 Marks, including 2,200 Marks interest on the Endowment Fund.

In December 1896 the Chaplain visited Grünberg in Silesia, a small English colony of 33 families, all managers and foremen in a large cloth-mill. Services were held in the concert room of the English Club, attended by over 60. It was agreed that quarterly visits would be arranged.

In 1897 Fry became one of the editors of *The Anglican Church Magazine*, together with Charles Faulkner from Croix, France. The magazine was no longer edited from Paris.

After the sudden death of the British Ambassador's wife, Lady Lascelles, on 3 April 1897, funeral services were held at St George's on 6 April. In the royal pews was the Emperor, Wilhelm II, in the uniform of an Admiral of the British Navy. In 1898 Mr Fry reported about a very successful "Conversazione" at the Hotel Vier-Jahreszeiten. More than 300 attended the concert and the dancing lasted until 2.30 a.m.

In the same year the annual European Chaplains' Conference was held in May at Berlin at the great ballroom of the British Embassy. The US Thanksgiving Day service was held in November 1898 in the presence of the popular US Consul, E Liefeld, who stressed the US friendship. The records show 2,235 communicants in 1902.

Succeeding his late mother, the Empress Friedrich, the Emperor Wilhelm II became Patron of St George's in 1904. Thus the link between the English Church and the German Court continued. "There is a very practical side to this [Patron] arrangement," noted the chaplain, "as it implies the continuance of an annual rent of £30 for the Royal Pew."

In December 1906 Revd Fry had a breakdown; Bishop Wilkinson had predicted that! From then on there are few reports on St George's. In 1909 this clergyman completed his 25th year as a Continental Chaplain, 14 years of which he spent at Berlin. He retired in September 1910.

1910 - 1919

In October 1910 the Revd Henry Morrison Williams became chaplain at Berlin. The newly appointed Bishop Bury made his first visitation to Berlin on 7-9 April 1911 for confirmation. By special permission of Emperor Wilhelm II, the Patron of St George's, it was the only English Church in Germany that remained open during World War I from 1914 to 1918. Mr Williams, in addition to serving as chaplain at St George's, did splendid and self-sacrificing work among British prisoners in the German camps, travelling all over Germany from camp to camp. From February 1917 he was helped by a German Lay Reader, George Liebig, the People's Warden. The US Embassy left Berlin and America entered the war. Therefore Liebig was asked by Mr Williams to help. This explains why St George's was never closed throughout the war, not even for a single Sunday.

When Williams was away visiting camps, Liebig read Matins on Sunday. In October 1923 Bishop Bury instituted George Liebig as Diocesan Lay Reader, an office which de facto he had filled for nearly seven years.

World War I:

After the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, Bishop Bury was placed in charge of all British prisoner-of-war camps. He was the only one officially allowed into Germany to visit the camp in Berlin in 1916. The only English church in Germany that remained open during World War I was St George's in Berlin. This was effected through special permission of Kaiser Wilhelm II who remained Patron of St George's until his abdication in 1918.

The chaplain at St George's, Berlin, the Revd H M Williams, was the only chaplain left. All other clergy was expelled and had to leave everything behind them. Mr Williams, however, was allowed to remain at his post. Sir Edward Goschen, British Ambassador, offered him a place in the evacuation train; but Williams refused to leave his post and said he should remain as long as there were people requiring his ministrations.

The Emperor, Wilhelm II, reported Bury, is supposed to have said that his mother's church must not be closed as long as there was any one to conduct its services. St George's provided services for Americans, for English wives of Germans, for the children of these mixed marriages who have been confirmed there, and others – an important congregation. In addition to his services at St George's, Mr Williams has gone all over Germany, except Bavaria, visiting the different camps and giving them services.

This journey must have been "almost superhuman", observed the Bishop who himself was called by his biographer "an intrepid traveller." "Williams could not have done his work without the special help and grace which GOD has given him" is the explanation for the Bishop.

Williams gave Holy Communion at Ruhleben [prisoner-of-war camp] every other Sunday. He was supported by Lay Readers: Mr Ketchum and Mr Kemp from the Missions to Seamen, Hamburg. At Ruhleben Camp they sang the national anthem "God save the King" for the first time at the end of a meeting with the Bishop. When his visit came to an end Bishop Bury left his pastoral staff with the prisoners to show that they were not forgotten by their friends at home. H V Bury, the son of the Bishop, noted, the Bishop's true report on the conditions found at Ruhleben did not find favour in his own country.

After the War:

The situation for English-speaking people had changed entirely at the end of World War I. Most of them had left Germany at the beginning of the war in 1914. Apart from occupation troops and people on official mission, only a small group of English-speaking people remained in Germany after 1918. Among them, especially in Berlin and Frankfurt, British women who had married Germans and decided after the end of the war not to leave their husbands and families and to stay in Germany. There were also British wives of German husbands who, on account of the war, had returned home and remained there. In the mid-twenties after the German economy started to recover, a number of English-speaking businessmen came back to Germany. Also students, almost entirely on university-level, recommenced studying in Germany.

In accordance with the principle that Anglican chaplaincies abroad should be formed where English-speaking people were living in sufficient numbers, most Anglican chaplaincies in Germany which had to be closed at the outbreak of World War I never reopened. Only in the important cities Berlin,

Dresden, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Köln, München, Stuttgart and Wiesbaden did a new parish life begin to grow on a small scale in spite of financial difficulties which made staffing and operations of chaplaincies a major problem.

1919 - 1935

After 1919, the congregation at Berlin consisted at first mostly of British-born wives and children of German workmen. They had lived in England until the war, the husbands being interned in the Isle of Man and elsewhere in England. After Armistice in November 1918 the husbands were repatriated and their families followed them.

Most wives and children came to Berlin not knowing a word of German. Some found life impossible and returned to England. They left their husbands. The brave ones, devoted to their husbands, remained and gradually found a new and true home. (From report by Bishop Bury, June 1922).

In addition, since 1920 some hundreds of British Armed Forces officers and men (various commissions) were in Berlin. They helped the scattered congregation.

The Revd David L S Pocock, SPG, started his work at St George's in 1919. During the war he worked among German civilian prisoners in England and found many whom he had known in camp in England.

The British Ambassador's wife, Lady d'Abernon, visited Mothers Meetings held at the Embassy. She won the hearts of the women, saying: "She's awfully nice, she's not a bit of a lidy!" The tradition of St George's was not forgotten:

We can never forget that our beautiful church was founded by a British-born woman married so happily to a German monarch and, more than ever, St George's ministers to other such women and draws through them men of Germany able to better understand Britain at her best [...]

In 1921 the patronage of St George's was granted to SPG. The property belonged now to the German State. In spite of difficulties, the church was cleaned and renovated in 1922. Hunger and inflation were forgotten for a while when special Christmas activities were held in 1922 in Berlin, as well as Hannover, Danzig, Breslau, etc. for children who had had to leave England with their German fathers.

The few chaplaincies in Germany were as usual under episcopal oversight. At the Annual Conference at Fulham Palace, London, in 1923 it was announced that Northern and Central Europe would have a full diocesan status of its own and would to all intent and purpose, be an independent diocese, although separation from the Diocese of London was not advisable at that time. Until the outbreak of World War II the SPG continued to support two chaplaincies in Berlin and in Southern Germany.

In 1923 it was recorded that St George's had among its communicants British, American, German, Indian, Chinese, Finnish and Russian members of the Anglican Church.

It was the peak period of the inflation. Questions came up such as: can we pay our coal bill, and: can people afford the high fares to church. Due to changes, the whole congregation, chaplain included, lived miles away from the church which was built when Berlin was a very different place from the Berlin of the 1920s as regards residential facilities, with a population of 4,000,000 in 1920.

After the currency reform in 1924, the question was raised whether St George's should be closed down for lack of funds in view of the "appalling cost of living". The Church did not need to be closed so long as the Licensed Lay Reader, Mr Liebig, "keeps the flag flying" with such services as were permitted to him. But naturally, after the departure of Mr Pocock in May 1924, the earnest desire was to have a fully qualified chaplain in charge, with as little interruption of the sequence as circumstances permitted.

In December 1924 the Revd R H Cragg started his chaplaincy at Berlin. In January 1925 he reported: "when I came to Berlin one knew what a given quantity of Marks would buy, and one was not in the trying position of holding billions of Marks, which might not even suffice for the tram fare to Church!" He also noted that business people were slowly drifting back to Berlin and visitors were fairly plentiful in the season.

The activities of the "Mothers Union" at Berlin were described as "the only live branch at present in Germany. The power of prayer and the power of fellowship are great in this world-wide Union."

In the autumn of 1926, the Bishop in Charge of the American Churches in Berlin, the Rt Revd Charles H Brent, visited Berlin. His position in the Episcopal Church in the USA was similar to that of the Bishop of Fulham in the Church of England.

In 1926 the Rt Revd Basil Staunton Batty was appointed to the newly constituted bishopric of Fulham, a post which he held until 1948. He signed: "Staunton Fulham, Anglican Bishop for Northern and Central Europe." Different from the pre-war days, there were now in Germany no more ruling royal families to visit which had so much enjoyed and largely supported the existence of the numerous Anglican chaplaincies. Compared with pre-war days also the number of confirmations had declined. Until 1914 Germany was a country with fashionable boarding-schools with a sizable English-speaking clientele. Resulting from this a regular demand for confirmations by the Bishop existed. Bishop Batty left no journals. His statements on the situation in Germany, as quoted in *The Anglican Church Magazine*, are commonplace such as, for example, in 1932 I found many of these chaplaincies very hard hit (by the economic crisis), yet there was a wonderful spirit prevailing and I feel sure that we shall pull through our difficulties."

When in Berlin in November 1926 for confirmation, the new Bishop Batty visited the German President Field-Marshal von Hindenburg. Returning to Berlin a year later, the Bishop visited the new British Ambassador, Sir Ronald and Lady Lindsay. He also had a long conversation with the Russian Orthodox Bishop in Berlin, Bishop Tikhon, followed by a deputation representing the High-Church Movement in the Lutheran Church. The Bishop stated: "We have a very strong centre at Berlin."

In November 1931, Mr Cragg was named Rural Dean for Northern Europe (this included Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark and Russia). He remained at Berlin until 1935 when he was

appointed one of the Bishop of Fulham's Commissaries, helping from London with the home administration of that diocese.

1935 - 1945

Upon the departure of Mr Cragg, the Revd George T Miller served as chaplain at Berlin until 1938. Bishop Batty visited in November 1936. He noted: "whilst in Berlin studied the German Church question very closely and had several most interesting interviews. Also visited branch of Mother's Union."

In February 1938 the State Secretary wrote to Sir Neville Henderson, British Ambassador to Berlin:

On account of the inadequacy of the SPG stipend, one should try to find a man who, in addition to the necessary qualification as chaplain, has sufficient private means to be able to live and maintain his position in Berlin.

In March 1938 the Revd George Lawrence was named Honorary Chaplain to HM Embassy at Berlin. He had served as SPG chaplain for Southern Germany between 1926 and 1929. He stayed at Berlin to the outbreak of World War II. After his departure, the Revd G Lawrence reported from London:

Mr Pierce has been made a Lay Reader and with the help of an American priest keeps the services going until such time as German authority forbids services to be held.

In May 1940 it was noted: "the American chaplain at Dresden, the Revd Edward M Bruce, maintains services throughout Germany."

During the nights of 23-24 and 25-26 November 1943 St George's was partly damaged by bombing. Further damage followed on several occasions. On 19 May 1944 the total destruction by incendiary bombs was reported by the caretaker, Herr Borchert. The Swiss authorities reported in 1944 from Berlin that Herr Borchert had suffered from nervous commotion but was not injured.

Postscript

During a personal visit in 1951, L V Headley, Senior Chaplain to the Forces in Berlin, made a survey:

[...] no trace now remains of the [church] building which was located in the "Schloßviertel" which is now East Germany. The Authorities demolished the ruins and only a Mosaic of the points of the compass was salvaged. This has been incorporated in the steps of the present new St George's Church at Berlin-Charlottenburg which was dedicated in November 1950.

Chaplains in Berlin:

1842 Robert Bellson
1880 Robert Brisco Earée
1890 Frank Owen
1895 James Henry Fry
1910 Henry Morrison Williams
1919 David L S Pocock
1924 Roland H Cragg, Rural Dean
1935 George T Miller
1938 George Lawrence (Honorary Chaplain)

In Europe the new diocese of Gibraltar was created in 1842 and took over the pastoral care of chaplaincies and congregations in Southern Europe and Turkey. 41 years later, in 1883, the Bishop of London appointed a suffragan bishop, who later was given the title of Bishop of Fulham, to supervise the chaplaincies of Northern and Central Europe.

Bishops:

1883 - 1886: Rt Revd J H Titcomb
1886 - 1911: Rt Revd Thomas E Wilkinson
1911 - 1926: Rt Revd Herbert Bury
1926 - 1945: Rt Revd B Staunton Batty