

He will give the Americans a treat

Lincoln guitar-strumming clergyman introduces something novel

PLANS CONCERT WITH A DIFFERENCE

(Chronicle exclusive)

TO minister to such a fast-expanding parish as the Ermine, Lincoln, keeps a vicar more than well occupied; indeed, the difficulty is to find time for relaxation.

This was precisely the problem that beset the Rev. John Hodgkinson, vicar of St. John's, Ermine — until he decided that guitar-playing was the answer.

At first, his idea was to use the guitar for strumming out folk songs. That was until Segovia, master of the classic guitar, struck a chord with him.

This shocked him

At least, it was a series of chords; in fact, a concert which he heard on the wireless. This decided Mr. Hodgkinson; he resolved that he would learn to play the instrument properly.

But it was not that easy. When he approached the leading teacher of the guitar in the country — Professor Adele Kramer of the Guildhall School of Music — he had something of a shock.

He was told that he would have to attend every day for a week and then put in a minimum of a two hour's lesson every month.

A compromise

For a vicar responsible for some 10,000 souls, with various social committees to serve on, being chaplain of St. George's Hospital, as well as having a new church project under way, this schedule was entirely impracticable.

He was able to compromise; he would have a lesson every two months. And this is what

he has been able to do for the past four years.

Mr. Hodgkinson explained that he took up the guitar purely as a hobby. He came to the Ermine nine years ago, working into the Vicarage as soon as the builders moved out.

As the parish expanded, so did the scope of his work. He was finding little time to indulge in a hobby . . . until he took a fancy to the guitar.

As a schoolboy he had learnt to play the trumpet; playing with the Nottingham Symphony and Nottingham Harmonic orchestras was "great fun."

Anti-social instrument

But, he wryly remarks, "The trumpet is an anti-social instrument when played at home."

He found it very limited in scope, being primarily a melodic instrument. Then came the guitar: "a complete instrument which contained both melody and accompaniment in itself."

"It was also easier to carry around than the piano . . ."

New Mr. Hodgkinson is able to tackle some of the classic works for the guitar — works by Bach, Villa-Lobos, Carcassi and others. Sometimes he and his family have a musical evening; his three children and his wife playing recorders and piano.

Quite often he takes his guitar into the church, which is "next door" to play; he finds



The Rev. John Hodgkinson, vicar of St. John's, Ermine, Lincoln, often sits alone in his church and plays his guitar—"The acoustics are admirable," he says.

the acoustics admirable for the instrument.

He made two

He has also made two guitars but they took him two years because he could only work in odd half-hours. He had to decide whether he wanted to play the guitar or make them. He decided on the former.

Through Mr. Hodgkinson's efforts Lincoln will have its first guitar concert in March next year.

The concert, which will be in the church, will be given by students and ex-students of

Professor Kramer, who herself will lead the concert.

Next year too, Mr. Hodgkinson will be off to America for a year. He is doing a year's exchange with the Rev. Robert Kem, of Des Moines, Iowa.

Like the Ermine, Mr. Kem's parish is a new one with a new church. Mr. Kem is an ex-F.B.I. man and served in the American Navy during the Second World War.

Mr. Hodgkinson will, of course, be taking his family as will Mr. Kem be bringing his; the project is "a straight swap."

And the guitar? Yes, that will be going to America too.

Metheringham houses declared unfit

RURAL COUNCIL DENY PLAN TO BUY 'ON THE CHEAP'

Ideal site for old people's homes

THE declaration of 14 properties in Hall Yard, Metheringham as unfit for human habitation was not a move to enable North Kesteven Rural Council to buy the area "on the cheap," it was stated at a public inquiry in Lincoln on Tuesday.

The inquiry, conducted by Mr. J. Beetham Shaw, on behalf of the Minister of Housing and Local Government, was to hear objections to the Metheringham Hall Yard compulsory purchase order.

The only objector was the owner of the property, Mr. F. C. Townsend, a former county councillor, who is willing to sell the property, but not at the price offered by the council who consider the properties unfit.

Council's intention

It is the intention of the council to erect dwellings for old people on the site.

Mr. P. H. Russell appeared for North Kesteven Rural Council and said there was agreement that four of the 14 properties in Hall Yard were unfit. There was no objection, either, about a property in Princess Street which came under the order.

With regard to the other ten properties in the clearance area, he said it was claimed there were common features of dampness, lack of repair and the only source of water was a pillar fountain which was 25 yards from some houses and 85 from one.

Only one of the 14 houses was "privileged" to have a tap over

a sink in an outside wash-house.

With regard to clearance, Mr. Russell said the council felt the most beneficial way would be by a compulsory purchase order, and subject to the question of whether the houses were fit or unfit, Mr. Townsend was a willing seller.

This site, he said, would be ideal for an old people's home for which there was a strong need in Metheringham.

The last census showed that 1,670 people lived in the parish and the nearest old folk's home was at Welbourn, nine miles away, and this was full.

The home for Metheringham would have communal facilities and a resident warden. The site was in the centre of the village, close to the church, shops and public house. It also had a level access.

Considered unfit

The council's chief public health inspector and surveyor, Mr. John Freeman, said he considered the houses were unfit for human habitation.

Answering Mr. F. A. Porter-Smith who appeared for Mr. Townsend, and who suggested that by getting the clearance

order they were trying to knock down the price, he said the objector had been approached and had intimated he was willing to sell.

Mr. Freeman said he had told Mr. Townsend that as far as he was concerned he considered the property unfit, and the valuation would be on that basis.

He agreed the properties had electricity and that mains water and sewers were available, and it would be possible for these to be connected to the properties.

He also agreed that some of the defects were normal items of repair and the amount of light and ventilation was something which was common to older types of property.

Rent attraction

Mr. Porter-Smith then asked: "Do you agree that many older people look for this size of house?" and Mr. Freeman said they did, but more with regard to the size of the rent than the property.

Mr. Porter-Smith: "We have a willing seller and a willing buyer, but you are saying they are unfit and you should pay a low price whereas we say they are not unfit and you should pay a proper price?"—"Yes. I consider the property is unfit."

Mr. Russell then said that it was three or four years ago that Mr. Townsend approached the council to see if they wanted the land for a housing site. The council were not interested then but in April 1963 they saw him again.

The Inspector asked if the council were in a position to re-house the people from Hall Yard and he was assured that they would be. There was a seven acre site in the village to be de-

veloped from 50 dwellings and they hoped to invite tenders at the beginning of 1965.

Presenting his case, Mr. Porter-Smith said the main point were on the question of valuation. His client was willing to sell but unable to agree on the basis on which negotiations should be carried out.

He thought the council were at fault in the way they had approached this matter. The resolution for a clearance order was not passed until July and the objector's valuer wanted to negotiate on market value—the district valuer on the other hand wanted to negotiate on the basis of a clearance order and it was impossible to come to an agreement.

Mr. John B. Tinsley, surveyor and valuer for Mr. Townsend said the annual rent roll was £390 but in fact only £211 was being charged. He has listed some of the defects in the property but maintained that with the exceptions of Nos 3, 7, 9 and 11, they were fit for habitation as they stood to-day.

Mr. Shaw closed the inquiry and went to visit the site. His findings will be made known at a later date.

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