

## JOHN WILLIAM MILLGATE

(from an article by John Matthews, Carisbrooke Parish Magazine)

Richard Smout's article in the March issue "90 Years old this year" brought back affectionate memories for me – not of John Curtis Millgate, who I never met, but of his son, John William Millgate. John William Millgate was born in 1896, the eldest of 3 children, all of whom were unmarried and resided with their father.

Mr J.W. Millgate always was in the shadow of his father, and any mention of him in the Isle of Wight County Press, even as a mature man, referred to him as the son of Mr J.C. Millgate. He was unfortunate. He had a hare lip, partially disguised by a toothbrush moustache, had a speech impediment and was rather deaf. Socially he was isolated, shy and appeared rather grumpy. He was short and slight in build.

He was educated at Portland Street Academy and trained as an Architect in London. He then joined his father's architectural practice of Stratton & Millgate. During the Second World War he worked as an architect for the Army in Sandown. After his father's death in 1956, he continued the practice for a time until it was taken over by Ernest L. Smith & Son. He carried on working until he retired at the age of 80 in Christmas 1976. His speciality was Church Architecture. He died in September 1977.

Mr Millgate's other passion was playing the Organ. He was mentioned in 1916 as the Sunday School Organist at St Thomas Newport. In 1940 he was appointed Organist at Shalfleet and then in 1942 at Gatcombe, where he also acted as Secretary/Treasurer for the Parochial Church Council.

My father, E.W. Matthews on demob from the Army was appointed Organist of Holy Trinity Church, Ryde in December 1946. But he had to resign 3 weeks later because he had obtained a teaching job in Birmingham. Although he came home at weekends, he had to get an early afternoon train back to Birmingham on Sundays, so he was not available for Evensong. Mr J.W. Millgate was appointed as his successor in January 1947. Ironically after 3 more months, my father returned permanently to the Island as he had not been able to find accommodation in Birmingham. My mother had a house in Ryde and he found a teaching job on the Island. He went into the Choir at Holy Trinity until he was appointed as Organist of St James East Cowes in 1951.

In 1953, aged 10, I joined the Choir myself with my younger brother. The Choir was directed by the Vicar, the Rev. David Ford. Mr Millgate was very kind to me in particular. He gave me a rather fine book on Natural History which he inscribed "from Uncle Millicus". He was a devout Anglican – in the Anglo-Catholic wing. He travelled everywhere by bus or train. On Sunday mornings he would toll the bell for the 8'clock Communion Service and act as Server. He would play for the 9.a.m. Parish Eucharist and the 11.30.a.m. Matins services. He would then go back to Newport, returning again for the 6.30.p.m. Evensong service.

Sometimes he would stay with us on Sunday afternoons.

On one occasion we travelled by car to Newport and picked him up. He took us first to a house in Clatterford Road, recently built and designed by his firm. It was the first modern house I had ever visited as there were few new houses built on the Island in the 1950s. Then we went to his office in Quay Street, where he showed us plans for the restoration of a wing of Swainstone House, damaged during the War, for Sir John Simeon. Then we viewed the new effigies of the Queen and the Duke of

Edinburgh on the wall of St Thomas Newport. Finally we finished with tea at God's Providence house, which was still owned by his father.

Mr Millgate resigned as Organist at Holy Trinity in 1957 and his successor was my father. I lost touch with him after that, although I did meet him once during the 1970s when he was sitting on a seat outside St Thomas. He played the piano for the Parish Eucharist service at St Thomas Newport and deputised at other Churches. His funeral took place at St Mary's Carisbrooke where he was a member of the congregation.

I have many memories of a gentle, cultured and well-read man, who was very kind to me during my boyhood.

JOHN MATTHEWS

Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries

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