

FRANK

Frank was born at Cheltenham in 1887. He showed how to be useful in the church and in the world after a less than promising start.

His father quit when Frank was a small boy. His mother took up with the local butcher, who was cruel, so in his early teens Frank ran away from home. About 30 miles later, he was taken in by a family on the edge of the Forest of Dean where he found work in the collieries and on the railway.

But he saw an advert for vacancies in the Metropolitan Police, and joined. By then, he was playing for the local rugby club, playing cornet in the local silver band, and engaged to a daughter of the family who had taken him in. He had also become Sunday School Secretary at the Methodist chapel.

Having received a reward of five shillings for stopping a runaway horse, Frank retired from the police in the rank of Chief Inspector, but stayed in London to take a lead in civil defence throughout World War 2. Returning to his roots in 1946, he became a local councillor with special concern for road safety.

He had several heart attacks. The one that got him occurred while he was helping an old blind lady to fill up some council forms.

There was standing room only for his funeral. In the envelope marked "to be opened in the event of my death" he had set out the order of service and concluded with the words "and I expect you to sing as though I were there singing with you."

But before his death, he had been selling tickets for the grandstand at the rugby club where he had played, as well as becoming choirmaster at the chapel and a Methodist circuit steward. I would accompany him to the Co-op butchery department where all sales were suspended while he discussed that Sunday's hymns with the butcher who was also the organist.

I was sent to stay with Frank and his wife in school holidays. They had a piano, and he showed me where Middle C was. I was still small, but over Easter it was clear when he conducted Stainer's Crucifixion that Good Friday was about something bad, whilst on the Sunday the word "Alleluia" obviously meant something good had happened. My dim understanding of Christ and of music grew not least from there.

The family presented a pulpit bible in Frank's memory some 60 years ago. It's inscribed "God's faithful servant." When the chapel closed just a few years ago, I was given that bible.

You see, Frank was my grandfather.