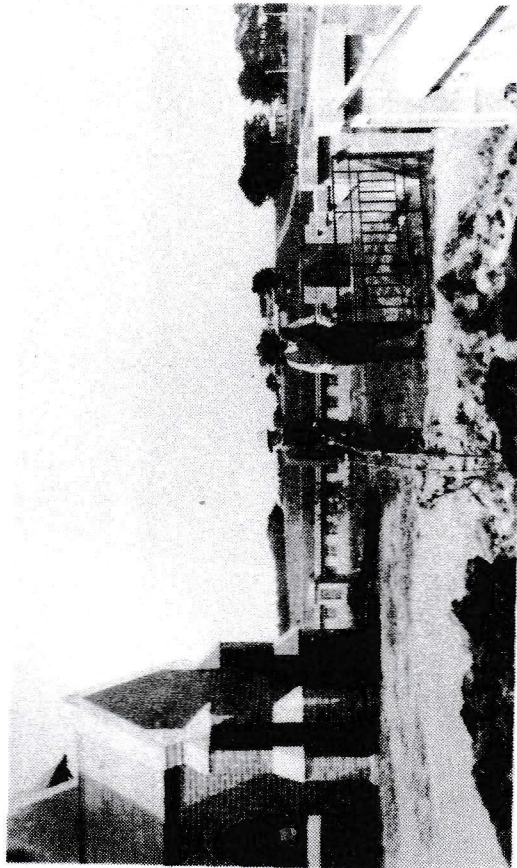


ELDRIDGE & SMITH - THE PERFECT PARTNERSHIP 1934 - 1940

When the Rev Edwin Eldridge (who liked to be called "Father Bill") took the chair at his first Vestry meeting in 1934, he moved that "the construction of the Sunday School be put into operation at once" - a complete change of mood from 1933 and perhaps indicative of the altered economic situation. The time was ripe for the emergence of two men of vision, talent and enthusiasm with the necessary money to make the dream come true - Edwin Eldridge and Captain George Smith, MBE.

By January 1935, George Smith had been nominated as vestryman by the Vicar and at the next meeting, the plans for additions and alterations to St John's, as drawn up by George Smith, who was a qualified architect, and submitted by the Vicar, were approved and the "Beautification Scheme" was under way.



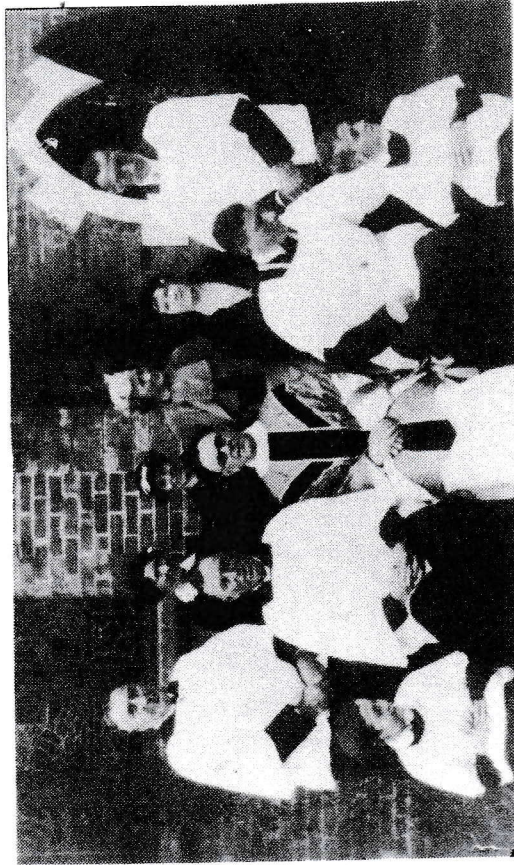
The Rev Edwin Eldridge and Captain George Smith in the Church grounds 1935

Father Eldridge wrote to many past and present parishioners advising them of the proposed improvements and suggesting a number of furnishings and ornaments needed. George Smith's plans for the proposed additions included conversion of the West Porch into a small chapel, the building of a Bell Tower over the side porch, the addition of two transepts and enlarged Sanctuary. All this was his gift in memory of his father Thomas Smith who died in 1934 in England. A granite tablet was incorporated into the East wall marking the dedication of the additions to the Church by the Bishop of Geelong, The Rt Rev JJ Booth, on 11th June, 1935.

The improvements also included a cement and brick fence along the front border, the cost of which was met by George Smith who also paid for the wiring of the Vicarage, Hall and Church for electrical supply.

In addition to the obvious material benefits of the partnership between Mr Eldridge and Mr Smith, the Vicar involved the congregation in many spiritual aspects. He was appointed Chaplain of the Victorian Chapter of the Server's Guild to which George Jarman belonged, and they encouraged boys to train as Servers. George Smith prepared a series of 50 slides showing the position of the Server during the Eucharist for teaching purposes. During this time, the Choir expanded, Mrs Eldridge participating actively in this as well as becoming the first President of the newly-formed Women's Guild.

Father Eldridge also initiated a monthly Parish Paper, a lively mixture of news and spiritual teachings with a striking cover designed by Les Hesketh. When the Eldridges left the Parish in 1940, at their farewell function in St John's Hall it was said that the Church, Parish hall and Church grounds "stood as an everlasting monument to the memory of the vicar and to Captain Smith who had financed the splendid achievement".



The Vicar with Servers, Organist and Choir members outside the Church in 1935

Standing: Mr Wallace Jarman, Miss Kath Nase, Miss Day, Mrs Mab Jarman, Mrs Eldridge Mr Fred Jarman. Seated: Ron Dunne, Capt George Smith, The Rev Edwin Eldridge, Mr George Jarman, John Cook