

# THE BRIDGE

Produced by Elmore Parish Council  
September 2020 Issue Twenty-Four



## From the Editor

Well here we are again after a long enforced break caused by covid19. I trust you are all safe and sound despite the pandemic. We are lucky to live in Elmore for all sorts of reasons but its isolation, dispersed nature and small population is a blessing just now. Not much has been going on; no WI, no Village Players, no Toddler group or Pilates etc but as you will read, the Rangers, Guides and Brownies are not to be put off by a mere pandemic. So this could well be rather a 'thin' issue but we thought it was time to get the ball rolling again inspired by the brilliant cricket we have been watching this summer - back on the BBC too.

Trevor Jones

## From The Chair of the Parish Council

### Half a Year On !

In early March this year, how many of us thought that the effects of this Covid-19 pandemic would still be lingering and disrupting our lives some 6 months later.

The last really big pandemic was the Spanish Flu of 1918, which was estimated to have killed up to 50 million people worldwide and, in Great Britain, lasted from June 1918 to May of 1920 – almost 2 years! Even during this pandemic there was opposition to wearing masks and social distancing measures. Fortunately, our health services have improved considerably over the last 100 years and our NHS staff have provided a service above and beyond the call of duty.

We get endless updates and statistics, which are mostly rather depressing and repetitive but let's try and hang on to the positive side. It has been heart-warming to see how neighbours in Elmore have helped each other during these tricky times. Family bonds and friendships may have been strengthened so let us maintain the links we have forged. If there is anyone in the village

who feels they need support – don't hesitate to ask, there are willing people here who can help.

Disappointingly, some holidays abroad have had to be put on hold, cancelled or, more recently been threatened with a possible 14-day quarantine on return. Fortunately, the Italian word 'quarantino', from which the English word 'quarantine' derives, hasn't been literally translated as it means 40 days rather than 14 days.

Despite this lengthy testing period it is hoped that you can all find a way forward that complies with the ever-changing rules and restrictions without turning ourselves into hermits. Luckily we live in a friendly village set in the beautiful Gloucestershire countryside with our gardens to keep us busy and for many, friends and family nearby.

### **Tree Planting**

In a previous issue of **The Bridge** the Parish Council offered to provide every household with a tree to plant as part of our contribution to climate change. Households were asked to contact our Clerk with requests so that we knew how many trees to obtain. It may be a surprise to you to learn that only one household contacted our clerk at the time so no progress has been made on the project.

However, the offer is still open – so if you would like a tree to plant in your garden please inform our Clerk ([elmore.parish@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:elmore.parish@hotmail.co.uk)).

### **Broadband**

Previous issues of this magazine have contained updates on the progress of the installation and improvement of the broadband throughout the village. The battles we have been fighting since 2012 have finally borne fruit and although there are still the occasional hiccups, things seem to be working well.

### **Security**

The protection of our homes and belongings remains a key issue in our lives. We are still getting the odd break-in, mostly in outbuildings on farms and gardens so we need to review our own security from time to time. Sadly, effective measures like CCTV and alarms are expensive but these need to be weighed against peace of mind.

Our local Policeman (PCSO Kevin Lee) is very happy to offer professional advice on security so please contact him if you would like such advice; ([Kevin.Lee@gloucestershire.police.pnn.uk](mailto:Kevin.Lee@gloucestershire.police.pnn.uk))

John Field

# **The Bridge Club**

Like many activities, The Bridge Club is suspended until further notice. Caroline Meek, who organises the club has informed The Bridge of a change in her contact details. She can now be reached on 01452 566489 or by email [cjmeek36@gmail.com](mailto:cjmeek36@gmail.com)

When the Bridge Club recommences, new members, novice or experienced, would be welcome. The Bridge Club meets on Monday evenings at the Village Hall.

## **Elmore Church News**

### **Appointment following retirement of vicar**

After a lengthy period following the retirement of our vicar, it is a great pleasure to be able to confirm that we have appointed the Reverend Richard Martin from Rochester to join the Benefice (the parishes of Elmore, Longney and Hardwicke), as Priest-in-Charge. He will be licensed in November and join us for Advent and Christmas.

Richard is delighted to have been chosen to join the ministry team who have worked so hard during the vacancy and is greatly looking forward to meeting everyone in November.

### **Elmore Music Festival Weekend**

Due to last minute Government changes in Covid-19 restrictions for live performances in places of worship (and other indoor venues) the music performances could not be held in the church. However, except for the organ recital, they did go ahead courtesy of Cathi Beloe who offered to host them in her barn - musicians in the barn; audience outside. The two evenings were very successful and well attended. For your 2021 diaries, another music festival is planned for the weekend of 6th, 7th & 8th August next year.

### **Elmore Weddings**

All but five of the weddings booked for Elmore Church this year have been postponed to 2021 or 2022 due to Covid-19 restrictions on

numbers attending not just in the church, but at reception venues too.  
Next year should be a busy one (if current restrictions are lifted).

Patricia (Pat) Buckland  
Benefice Reader and Churchwarden at Elmore

## **Church Services for Elmore**

*Unless otherwise publicised the regular service pattern is:*

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month – Parish Eucharist at Elmore 9.30am

2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month – Evensong at Elmore 4.00pm

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month – No service at Elmore\*

\* As the fifth Sunday of November is Advent Sunday, there will be a  
Sung Evensong service at 4.00pm (with choir) - see below

### **Elmore Weddings & Funerals**

Wedding: On 10th July - William Lee & Emily Hobbs

Funerals: On 9th April - Rodney William Ryder

On 14th April - Alexandra Escourt

### **Notable Services in September - December**

Sunday, 4th October - Elmore Harvest Festival - 9.30am

Sunday, November 22nd

Induction of Revd. Richard Martin as Priest-in-Charge of our Benefice:  
Service at Hardwicke Church at *(Time tbc)*

Sunday, 29th November - Advent Sunday

Sung Evensong with Choir - 4.00pm

Sunday, December 20th - 6.30pm at Longney

Nine Lessons & Carols

Thursday, 24th December - Midnight Mass at Elmore - 11.15pm  
Friday, 25th December - Christmas Morning Eucharist  
at Longney at 9.30am

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Baptism (Christening) or Weddings: Church Office 01452 720015

Our Website: [www.elmorechurch.info](http://www.elmorechurch.info)

Facebook: @ElmoreParishChurch

Church email address:  
[church-office@hardwicke-elmores-longney.church](mailto:church-office@hardwicke-elmores-longney.church)

## **Rev Richard Martin: an introduction**

I was born in Brighton in 1959. After school I worked for the Prudential in London and Brighton before being accepted to train with the Church Army in Blackheath, in 1985. Here I met Gill: we married in 1988, and began our first post in Illingworth, a needy and troubled parish north of Halifax in West Yorkshire. Our first two children, Aidan and Sophie, were born there. We greatly enjoyed our 6 years there and I completed a BA at Leeds. In 1994 We moved to the Team parish of Dewsbury where I was given the 5 year task of re-building (spiritually and literally) Trinity Church, Batley Carr. Ruth was born in 1995, and I finished an MA. They were manic but very rewarding years.

In 1999 we moved south, to St Francis Strood, in the Rochester Diocese. Gill took over from me there as Associate Minister in 2002 so I could take a PGCE in RE – I then taught in 2 Kent secondary schools, in the last 2 years reducing my timetable so I could train for ordination part-time at SEITE. I was made deacon in 2009 and began a curacy at St Aidan's Gravesend, being priested the following year. In 2012 I was appointed priest-in-charge at Holy Family and Ifield, becoming Rector after the Bishop lifted the suspension of the Living in 2018. The same year, Gill left St Francis Strood and became Children and Families' worker in the 3 local Churches and then began a post as a full-time CofE chaplain at Eastwood Park women's prison, near Thornbury,

where she has been working since March 2020, commuting weekly from Kent. This coincided with my feeling that it was time to move on from the Gravesend parishes, after 8 happy years, and so began the process of discerning where God might be calling me to.

It was a great joy to discover that Hardwicke, Elmore and Longney is that place! I am very much looking forward to moving in, around November 5th, to my licensing on November 22nd, and to getting to know the Churches and the communities they serve as we celebrate Christmas together in whatever forms may be allowed this year, and then on into a New Year and what I suspect will be a very challenging future. In the name of God I am going to be priest-in-charge for everyone in the 3 parishes so please do feel that you can contact me, whether or not you'd call yourself a Christian.

In my spare time I like cricket, football, jigsaws, crosswords, cycling, train travel, and love terrible jokes. I'm a 3rd Order Franciscan and so am interested in the links between faith and the environment, and in enabling Christians' links with members of other faiths.

I hope that's a helpful introduction. Do please pray for us as we make this move, as we will for you. God bless you!

Richard and Gill

## **World War 1 Records**

John Field continues with his excellent histories of the men of Elmore or those with strong Elmore connections who served in WW1 and survived.

### **Private Horace James Watts (1898 - 1960)**

Horace Watts was born in Elmore on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1898 and was the son of William Watts (1867-1937) and Mary Elizabeth Green (1886-1933). The 1911 Census shows that there were 10 children in the family and by this time Horace was 12 and still at school – probably the little school in Elmore, which is now the Village Hall. At some stage he left school, probably aged around 16

in 1914 and became the local postman. So, at the outbreak of WW1, Horace would have been too young to join the Army and he had to wait until the spring of 1916 by which time he would have 18.

Although the Watts family story has it that “*Horace ran off to join the Army under age so went to join the Devonshire Regiment rather than staying in Gloucestershire where he might be recognised*”, the official records show that Horace James Watts joined the Army in May 1916 (aged 18), and was allocated to the 8<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment and given the Army Number 291890. He was probably as one of the many reinforcements needed at that time as the Devonshires had suffered many casualties during the 1915 battles on The Somme. By the time Horace joined his unit the Devonshires had been transferred from 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade in 5<sup>th</sup> Division to 95<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the same Division. As it happened Horace was in the same Division as both of his older brothers, William and Fred Watts, who were in the Gloucestershire Regiment but it is unlikely that their paths would have crossed in the mud of the Somme battlefields.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment took part in The Battle of Albert (1<sup>st</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> July), The Battle of Bazentine Ridge (14<sup>th</sup> July) and the attacks on High Wood (15<sup>th</sup> July), The Battle of Delville Wood (15<sup>th</sup> July – 3<sup>rd</sup> September), The Battle of Guillemont (3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> September) as well as Operations on the Ancre (13<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> November).

The first major battle of that year for the Allies was The Battle of Albert from 1<sup>st</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> July 1916. The plan was to capture the German line along a 14-mile frontage so the artillery barrage started 7 days prior to the attack but despite this intense barrage actually left most of the German defences intact. The first day of the offensive was the most disastrous one recorded to date for the British with some 57,000 casualties which amounted to 40% of the total strength of those units involved. The following extract from the Devonshire Regiment’s war diaries paints a graphic picture of the life endured by the soldiers on The Somme during 1916.

“The Somme remained a relatively quiet sector until the main offensive began on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916. On that morning the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Devonshires attacked towards Mansel Copse, where well-placed machine guns, whose crews had survived the preliminary bombardment, cut down hundreds of advancing men. Two companies of the 8<sup>th</sup> Devonshires followed and met the same fate. By noon survivors of both Battalions were scattered across the muddy battlefield. At 1530 hours the final company of the 8<sup>th</sup> Devonshires were

ordered forward. Their commander, Captain Eric Savill, realising what had happened to the other companies of both Battalions and found a route that avoided the machine guns and was able to occupy a stretch of the German trenches. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> July the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion beat off a German counter-attack and were able to advance. On the 4<sup>th</sup> July the Padre of the 8<sup>th</sup> Devonshires, Capt Crosse, buried 160 officers and men of both the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Battalions at Mansel Copse, erecting a plaque: “*The Devonshires held this trench. The Devonshires hold it still*”.

On 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> July both Battalions were involved in a night attack on Bazentin. In a second night attack on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July, Private Theodore Veale of the 8<sup>th</sup> Devonshires won the Regiment’s first Victoria Cross (VC) of the War rescuing Captain Eric Savill under fire. By the end of July 1916 the two Battalions had suffered 1,137 casualties on the Somme and were withdrawn for rest and a chance to reform with new reinforcements. In early September the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion lost many men as casualties from heavy shelling during an attack near Ginchy. In three days the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion had suffered 730 casualties.

In April 1917, during the Battle of Arras, both Battalions attacked Ecoust with great success with light casualties but, a month later, capturing part of Bullecourt the cost was 382 killed and wounded. Early October found both Battalions near Passchendaele enduring the worst of the Third Battle of Ypres. On the 26<sup>th</sup> October in an unsuccessful attack on Gheluvelt both Battalions suffered lost heavy casualties again – especially among their officers, only three of whom from the two Battalions emerged unscathed.”

Horace Watts was one of the many casualties of 8<sup>th</sup> Devonshires on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1917. He was evacuated on 26 Ambulance Train and after some rehabilitation was deemed unfit for front line service. His medical records show that he had problems with the ‘*inflammation in the connective tissue on his left heel*’ he was therefore transferred to the Labour Corps and given a different Army number of 635599. He was discharged on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1919 with a disability.

Horace returned home to the family in Elmore and continued to live at The Weir. He emigrated to Melbourne, Victoria, Australia on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1922 aged 24 on the ship called the ‘Demosthene’. In Australia in 1927 he married Ivy Estella Bennett (1905-1998).



Horace's profession as recorded on the Australian Electoral Rolls was a labourer in the town of Kalpienang in the State of Victoria from the time of his arrival until 1936. However, in 1937 he was shown as a farmer in Culgoa, Victoria and lived there from 1937 onwards.

Horace died in Australia on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1960 and is buried in Wycheproof, Victoria. Horace and Ivy Watts left behind 5 children; William, Dorothy, Dulcie, Velma and Muriel. As well as being Michael Watts' uncle, Horace's older brothers William Ray Watts (1892-1959) and Frederick Elias Watts (1896 - 1950) both took part in WW1 and survived – their stories were in the previous issue of The Bridge.

## **Private Harold Thomas Meek (1900 – 1990)**

Harold Thomas Meek was born in Elmore Back and the family then moved to 'The Shop' – his parents were Walter Harold Meek (1870 – 1945) and Emma Jenner (1862 – 1943). Walter's trade, listed on the 1911 Census, was 'Baker and Grocer'.

Harold Meek Joined the Army on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1918 at the age of 18 years and 2 months. His Army number 17068; (43681) he was first allocated to 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment then on completion of his training in early April he was posted to 14<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion (1<sup>st</sup> Birmingham), The Warwickshire Regiment.

During 1917, before Harold joined the Army, the Battalion took part in the Second Battle of Passchendaele and suffered many casualties. In late November of that year, what was left of the Battalion was then sent to Italy to help bolster the Italian defences.

However, in January of 1918 they returned to France and became a Pioneer Battalion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division which was involved in various actions on the Western Front including;

The Battle of Albert (21/22 Aug), The Battle of Bapaume (21 Aug – 3 Sep), The Battle of Drocourt-Queant (2 Sep), The Battle of the Epehy (13/14 Sep), The Battle of the Canal du Nord, The pursuit to the Selle, The Battle of the Selle.

By the time that Harold Meek joined the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion it would have been late April and his unit was engaged in following the retreat of the German Army.

Although many Pioneer Battalions were the 'work horses' of their divisions in that they dug trenches, assisted the Sappers building fortifications, acting as

stretcher bearers and of course, burying the dead, they often fought alongside the other infantry battalions acquitting themselves remarkably well.

Harold had a short military career during WW1 and returned home to Elmore after the war. He married Florence Evangeline Watts (1906-1987) in 1930. Children: Gordon Meek (1930-2011) (who married Jean Reynolds) & Kenneth Meek (1933-2016).

## **Sergeant George Robert Bates, Royal Field Artillery**

Although not strictly an Elmore resident, George Robert Bates was married in Elmore Church to a woman born in Elmore and whose family still have strong connections here.

George Bates was born in Toxteth Park, Lancashire on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1885 and was the son of Edward Bates (1859-1924) and Georgina Goghlan (1861-1908). He was the third child of 7 children in the family and the 1901 Census lists him – aged 14 - as a blacksmith! When his mother died in 1908 George's younger brothers were still only 13 and 10.

According to his official Army records he joined the Army on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1908 aged 23, just 4 days after his mother, Georgina, died. He was assigned to the Royal Field Artillery and his record shows that he served in India and South Africa prior to WW1.

In June 1916, during WW1, while on leave, he married Ethel May Watts (1890-1973) (*the elder sister of William Watts and Fred Watts – whose stories were in the last issue of The Bridge, as well Horace Watts whose story is also in this issue*) in Elmore Church. Ethel's brother, William Ray Watts, acted as 'Best Man' at the wedding. During WW1, Ethel Watts worked for some time in the National Shell Filling Factory No. 5 (munitions factory) in Quedgeley for the princely wage of £1 (20 shillings) for a 48 hour week!

In August 1917 Sgt George Bates was gassed on the front line in France and also wounded in the right arm. He was evacuated through the usual front line Casualty Stations and Field Hospitals to a hospital in Cambridge, England. It is highly likely that his new wife, Ethel May Watts moved up to the Cambridge area around that time as in July of 1918 Ethel gave birth to twins, Joan Ethel Bates (1918-2014) and Ronald George Bates (1918-1969) while she was living in Tendring, Essex, which is situated just east of Colchester. George Bates was discharged from the Army in March 1919 having served the

Colours for 10 years and 221 days of which 2 years and 270 days were spent in France during WW1. The Army records show that he applied for a disability pension on the ground of rheumatism but this was rejected.

The '1939 Register' shows that George Bates was a postman in Gloucester, living at 66 Mayfair Road. He died on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1964 in Gloucester aged 79 and Ethel May Bates (née Watts), his wife, died in 1973 aged 83. Their son, Ronald George Bates married Audrey Ethel Mayo who was born in Mayo Cottage in Weir Lane, Elmore in 1920. Ronald died in 1969 and their daughter, Joan Ethel Bates married Charles Thomson in 1942 and she died in 2004.

## **The Village Players**

It is with much regret that we announce that it is not feasible for Village Players to perform their usual pantomime this year.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported Village Players and hope you will continue to support us in 2021.

We aim to be back performing next year as we celebrate our 40th anniversary.

## **Citizens Advice Stroud & Cotswold – Attendance Allowance**

This is a benefit that helps with extra costs if you have an illness or disability, either physical or mental or both, and severe enough to require someone else to help you with your personal care needs. You can make a claim for Attendance Allowance if you have reached State Pension age or are older, and it is normally payable after six months of needing the care. It is paid at one of two rates, £58.70 or £87.65 per week, depending on your care needs. Attendance Allowance is tax-free and not means-tested, which means your income and savings will not affect the level you may be entitled to.

You do not need to have someone actually caring for you in order to make a claim. The claim form can be obtained from the Attendance Allowance helpline on 0800 731 0122 by providing your contact details. Please note that the form is complicated and lengthy and you may wish to get advice and help before completing it. If you would like more advice on this or other matters please contact Stroud Citizens Advice weekdays 10 am to 4 pm on Freephone: 0808 800 0510. Further information can also be found at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) and then search for attendance allowance.

## **1st Elmore Guides and 1st Elmore Rangers**

With the whole country on lockdown back in March our meetings stopped at the Village Hall. The Leaders created a number of challenge packs for the girls to attempt at home, the themes celebrated Earth Hour, Easter, St. Georges Day and the 75 Years since VE Day. From June we started virtual meetings online through Google Meet where both Guides and Rangers joined together, all the girls enjoyed seeing each other virtually. During our meetings we achieved the First Aid Skills Builder, girls used their family members to practice applying slings and placing in the recovery position. We also have a guest speaker to come online to talk about reptiles, we got to see lizards, geckos and snakes. To finish the term we had a online quiz. This term we will be continuing with our virtual meetings, we have a yoga session planned and looking forward to learning British Sign Language.

*If your daughter is interested in joining Guides (10-14 years old) or Rangers (14-18 years old) please call Catherine on 01452 678181.*

## **1st Elmore Brownies**

During the lockdown we created a private Facebook Group which enabled us to engage with the girls. During this period of time we did a St Georges Day Challenge, a VE Day Challenge when the girls had a go at baking ration cake, we also held a competition between the Leaders which Barn Owl won! We continued with our badge work which included Speedy Explorers when the girls created zip wires for their

teddies to ride. We also did our Baking Badge and held a Summer Challenge.

This term we are holding our meetings using Zoom Pro and looking forward to this new challenge and once again being able to see everyone. We will be doing craft activities, challenges, holding a quiz and bingo night and taking part in Parliament Week.

Should you wish your daughter to join 1st Elmore Brownies please contact Jenny Hartell via [1stelmorebrownies@gmail.com](mailto:1stelmorebrownies@gmail.com).'

## **Neighbourhood Watch**

I'm sure most of you are well aware that fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour in Elmore is on the increase: the evidence is there for all to see in gateways and lay-bys, as we travel around the village.

Members of the Parish Council, and other villagers, have been in contact with the Police fairly regularly about these growing problems, and whilst the response from the Police has been supportive they are unable to do much without concrete evidence. The Police at local level are very clearly on our side and want to help, but their resources are stretched at the moment as we all know.

At a recent Parish Council meeting, it was suggested that a Neighbourhood Watch scheme could be helpful in providing a co-ordinated response from the community to antisocial behaviour helping the Police with the evidence they require to take action.

We have had a neighbourhood watch scheme in Elmore, which I set up many years ago. Unfortunately, at that time, there was very little support for such a scheme, which relies on a "communications cascade" in the village, in other words we have to set up and run a means of keeping each other informed about matters of concern. Because of the lack of interest in the village (and even resistance in some places) the Elmore Neighbourhood Watch scheme never really worked. Also, of course, communication at that time was much more difficult (no email, text etc).

However, the scheme still (technically) exists, and I continue to receive leaflets, which I don't circulate, as the scheme isn't really "live".

Now, though, I think times might be different, and certainly the mood of concern within the village is very strong, and if a new "cascade" is set up, modern communications would make it much more effective. **I hope you've found this update interesting, and it would now be good to find someone to take on the role of leading the Elmore Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and update the communication network so that it works for today. If you think you could take this on, please get in touch with me or any member of the Parish Council**

Andy Nash

## **Elmore Village Hall**

As you may be aware, the Village Hall has been closed since the end of March. The Hall is now open to our regular 'user groups', who will be resuming their activities when appropriate. The Hall is not yet available for private hire, but we will be monitoring the situation during the coming months and look forward to welcoming qualifying private hirers, when possible.

We have received a non-refundable grant from Government, through Stroud DC to cover any loss of income, also expenditure towards making the Hall more hygienic and a safer place to attend for the remainder of the crisis and beyond. This is an unexpected and most welcome grant.

During closure, improvements have been completed, as follows.....

Entrance hall decorated, new curtains. New table covering.

Ladies & gents toilets decorated. Gents toilet floor tiled with 'non-slip' safety tiles

Some soffits and rear door repainted

All flat roofing improved and re-felted.

New rear corner external floodlight.

Under sink water heater replaced in kitchen.

Sanitiser stations and signage.

Paper towel dispensers re-installed in all toilets.

Baby changing table installed.

All chairs sold and cleared from Hall. Replacement lightweight chairs are now in place.

Many thanks to all users and supporters of the Hall. We look forward welcoming you back to EVH when possible

John Hardisty, Chairman