



Top, l to r: Dick & Rosemary Taylor (married June 1966 in Newmarket); Lyndon & Lettice Palmer (May 1966, Cornwall), Jennie & Richard Blackburn (Sept 1966, Kent); bottom: Robin & Mary Wren (December 1966, Soberton); Sandra & Barry Henderson (Oct 1966, Portsmouth), Iain & Jane Rennie (Nov 1966, Portsmouth)

Golden couples marking 50 years

IT was a day of golden memories – as worshippers celebrated the 50th wedding anniversaries of seven couples.

Churchgoers at St Peter's, Soberton, were amazed to discover five couples living in their village were celebrating golden wedding anniversaries in the same year.

Then churchwarden Louise McEwan discovered another two couples who had been married at St Peter's 50 years ago. So they marked the golden wedding anniversaries of all seven of couples with a special Sunday morning celebration.

The congregation heard from all seven couples during the service. Lay minister Norman Chapman, who led the service, asked each bride and groom about their wedding day, and where they went for their honeymoons.

Two had been married at St Peter's, two married in Portsmouth and the other three further afield in Newmarket, Cornwall and Kent. Two had celebrated their anniversaries only a week before the special service.

The service also included



Bob and Judy Elkington: married in September 1966 in Soberton

wedding vows being remade, words of wisdom from Song of Songs and hymns selected by the couples themselves. Photos of their wedding days in 1966 were also on display. The church was filled with families and friends of the special couples, who enthusiastically joined in the promise to support the couples in their future married lives.

Norman said: "I preached on the text from the Song of Songs

about how a good marriage is created and worked on, with both needing to stand together to face the world. It is about establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, the dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal.

"Each did not only marry the right partner, but also had to be the right partner. Couples need to be united in each other – living, listening and praying together so

that, in this love, they can let the living love of God be their example."

After the prayers, there was a reading of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 116* and hymns including *Love Divine* and *The Lord's My Shepherd*. The couples were given a memento of the day in the form of coasters with pictures of St Peter's on, and the special day ended with a glass of bubbly and a toast to the golden couples.

Ethos of Gosport schools is praised

INSPECTORS have praised the Christian character of two C of E schools in Gosport.

Separate reports into Leesland C of E Infant and Leesland C of E Junior Schools praised the way children understood the core values of love, respect and grace, and how these underpin the ethos and culture in both schools.

Leadership and management of both schools was judged to be strong. The schools now work in federation with an executive headteacher, Claire Wilson. She was described as principled and setting high expectations for everyone within a supportive team environment.

Another strength of the two schools was the work of foundation governors and staff, who focus on developing links with between the school, parish and community. Parents were clear that children were cared for in an environment that nurtured their wellbeing. Staff and school leaders were praised for being helpful and approachable.

The federation was pleased that inspectors recognised the hard work to improve pupils' academic attainment.