



QUITE early in the Harringay Crusade last year it became evident that some much larger stadium would be needed to accommodate the crowds that would want to attend the final meetings. In faith the Committee began negotiations with Wembley Stadium, which was free on the Saturday following the Cup Final, and the events proved their faith to be more than justified. It is estimated that nearly 120,000 people crowded into Wembley, and some 65,000 into the White City Stadium on the same afternoon. The press called the evening meeting the largest religious gathering of all known history.

Dr. Graham left Great Britain in 1954 with a unanimous invitation to return, and it was felt that though the main Crusade of the 1955 visit should be in some other great centre, nevertheless because of his immense influence in London he should also hold some meetings in the capital. Stadiums were considered, and at one time it seemed likely that he would preach in four different centres of London for a few days in each. But finally it was agreed that

Wembley, the scene of the great thanksgiving service of the year before, was the most suitable and the most appropriate. Arrangements were therefore made by the Crusade Executive Committee under the Chairmanship of the Bishop of Barking to hire the Empire Stadium, Wembley, for two weeks beginning May 9th, at a cost of some £30,000.

Round about Christmas time, when the plans for the All Scotland Crusade were becoming clearer, it was plain that an opening date of May 9th would not allow sufficient time between the conclusion of the Scottish Crusade and the immense burden of Wembley. Plans were therefore revised, and it was agreed to begin the Crusade on a Saturday rather than a Monday, and to hold the meetings from May 14th to May 21st.

News of Graham's return met with a varied response. Some were thrilled at the faith and venture of such an undertaking; others were sceptical and critical. The same comments were made as had been made of Harringay a

LEY IN THE RAIN

by **F. ROY CATTELL**

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year before—that it was too vast; that it was without “atmosphere”; that it was too far from central London. But in January, when letters were sent to all who had organised coach parties for the Harringay meetings, it was clear that the demand for seats was going to be very great—applications were streaming in long before a single ticket was printed. The interest aroused in the press, and far beyond the Evangelical world, was evident.

Plans take shape

As time drew on, meetings were held with the officials at Wembley Stadium and plans were made in the light of last year's experience. Nothing could have been more helpful than the co-operation of the Wembley officials as together the plans were laid to transform the stadium into a vast open-air auditorium. One by one the difficulties were tackled and met. With the ready co-operation of the police, the A.A. and the R.A.C., arrangements were made for traffic control (how many who visited the stadium noticed the policemen with walkie-talkie apparatus high on the balcony overlooking Wembley Way?). British Railways sent representatives to the Committee meetings, printed their own Billy Graham handouts, and were allocated blocks of tickets. Publicity experts decided on a scheme very much less ambitious than had been necessary a year before. Prayer letters carried the changing needs of these days of planning to the great company of prayer groups and partners, and preliminary plans were made for

recruiting a choir and a corps of stewards, for training counsellors and enlisting voluntary help.

Very early in the planning both Saturday meetings were fully booked, and it was agreed to hold an additional service on the afternoon of May 21st to accommodate those who could not otherwise be given tickets.

The Arrival

At 5.15 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11th, a small crowd was waiting at Euston Station as Dr. Graham's train drew



to the platform. Accompanied by his wife and a few members of the Team, he stepped from the Royal Scot and was greeted by the Bishop of Barking with members of the Committee, and by a number of press men. That evening he spent quietly in his hotel, conferring privately with members of his Team and with the Bishop.



The next day, Thursday, witnessed another of the large press conferences that always mark the opening of such a Crusade. Well over a hundred reporters, including the Recording Service of the B.B.C., gathered in a private room at the Waldorf Hotel to hear a statement by Dr. Graham and to ask their questions: "Dr. Graham, is it possible to be a communist and a Christian?" "Dr. Graham, is there any significance in the fact that this year your platform at Wembley will be facing the

Royal Box?" "Dr. Graham, why have you broken your usual rule, and returned to a city so soon after a previous visit?" At the conclusion of this meeting, Dr. Graham with Mr. George Goyder, Chairman of the Publicity Committee, had lunch with fourteen out of the seventeen chief Editors of the London daily and evening papers, and talked with them for over two hours.

That same evening a reception was held at Church House, Westminster. This had been planned especially for M.P.'s, but with the announcement of the General Election, plans were revised and invitations were sent to people of note in all walks of life, including the lay members of the Church Assembly (clergy would have their opportunity next day). Between seven hundred and fifty and eight hundred guests accepted the invitation, which was sent to them in the name of the Bishop of Barking and the Hon. Mrs. Gough. Tea was served in the Hoare Memorial Hall, and guests were presented to their host and hostess, to Dr. and Mrs. Graham and to the Rt. Hon. Lord and Lady Luke. After refreshment, the guests moved into the great circular Assembly Hall and listened with close attention to an address by Dr. Graham.

On Friday morning Dr. Graham spoke again, this time to invited Ministers of all denominations in the Royal Festival Hall. Well over two thousand were present, though it was disappointing that many should have asked for tickets and then made no use of them. Beverly Shea sang: Cliff Barrows led the company in a hymn, accompanied by Paul Mickelson at the organ. Dr. Graham then spoke for almost an hour, a searching and moving message on the work of an evangelist, and a period of silent rededication brought the meeting to a close. The Committee, with Dr. Graham and his Team, lunched together at a hotel and spent the afternoon conferring about future plans. That evening Dr. Graham had the opportunity of meeting privately a number who had been deeply influenced by his ministry last year.

Wembley

May 14th saw London under a dull grey sky. By 2.30 p.m. some six thousand workers had gathered at Wembley Stadium, where workmen had been building the bridges, arranging special seating, erecting a platform, overhauling the public address system, and making all the necessary arrangements. A first and last choir practice

was held; final briefing sessions for counsellors and stewards, and a service of dedication led by Cliff Barrows took up the afternoon. Heavy rain made no difference to the programme, and by six o'clock when the turnstiles opened Wembley was already a seething mass of people. About a thousand special coaches and some thirty special trains, together with private and public transport, were already bringing the crowds. Many unofficial enterprises were also in hand, outside the control either of the Crusade Committee or the Wembley authorities: papers and popcorn were hawked outside the arena; "real photos," distributed by an evening paper for advertising, were being sold at twopence by the wide boys (whose attempt at bribery to secure a crate of them had met with no success); others were selling Billy Graham badges and buttons; some succeeded by fraud in obtaining 800 copies of a Christian newspaper and hawking it at double price; you could even hear one enterprising merchant calling "Billy Graham peanuts; Billy Graham peanuts; they've got the secret! Billy Graham peanuts!"

Meetings through the week

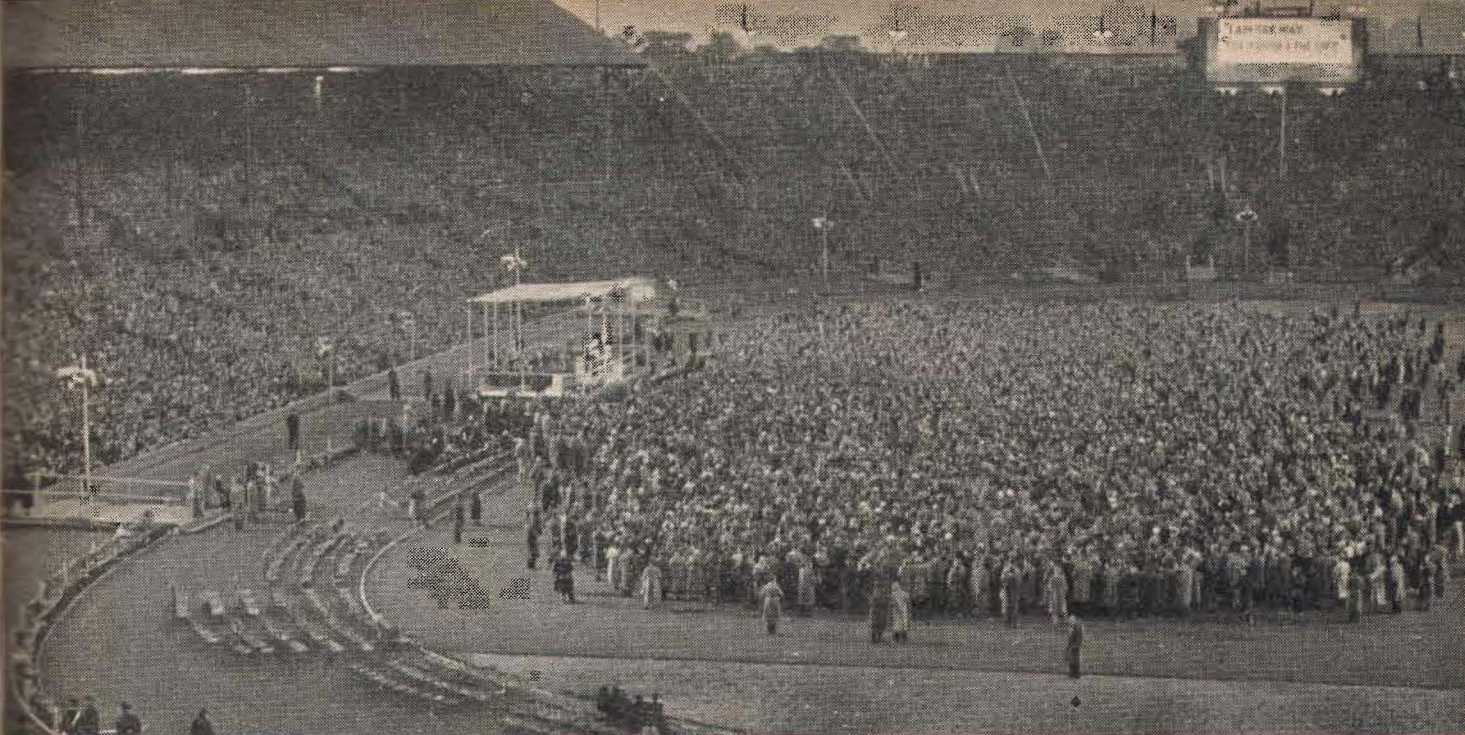
It is hard to see that the old charge of emotionalism can ever be brought again as the reason for the many who have responded to Graham's appeals.

The weather was cold, and intermittent showers continued all through the evening. Nevertheless at 7.30 when Dr. Graham, the Bishop of Barking, Chairman of the Executive Committee and the Rev. F. P. Copland Simmonds, Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council, emerged to face the cameras, the stadium was well filled. The whole service was recorded by the B.B.C. for use on the Overseas programmes, and the questions that had been in the minds of many were quickly answered. Could the people hear? Could Dr. Graham hold their attention in spite of the cold, the many standing, the rain? Would people respond, crossing their bridges and standing on the turf to be counselled and helped? Rain, which had fallen during the preliminaries, ceased as Dr. Graham began his address (which is reprinted in a condensed form on page 5 of this issue). The setting sun appeared from behind the clouds at the Western end of the stadium, giving a radiance to the scene. At the conclusion of the address, when the invitation was given, the sight of thousands streaming across the turf was one that none who saw it will ever forget. Within ten minutes there were between five and six thousand people (half of them counsellors) before the platform; so great was the response that plans for counselling had to be re-adjusted, and further cards and booklets ordered from the printer so that supplies should last through the Crusade.

Follow-up

In one of the dressing rooms at the East end of the stadium a team of seventy or eighty worked far into the night dealing with the Enquirers' information cards filled in by the counsellors, to ensure that those who had come forward that night should receive a personal letter





from Dr. Graham and further help and encouragement at the first possible moment. These faithful people worked night by night behind the scenes, often during the meeting itself and sometimes almost till morning. When a church preference was noted, the minister named was notified within twenty-four hours.

So through the week it continued. Monday and Tuesday again saw thousands standing in the rain, and leaving covered seats to stand on sopping turf in a downpour to confess the decisions of their hearts. On Tuesday Dr. and Mrs. Graham had the privilege of paying a private visit to Clarence House where they were received by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and also talked with Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret. Later they lunched at the Mansion House with the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress who had attended the opening meeting of the Crusade. On Wednesday Dr. Graham was the guest of Alderman and Mrs. Cyril Black at a luncheon in Wimbledon where he met the Mayors of most of the South London Boroughs and others engaged in local government. That evening the television roving cameras carried a picture of Wembley into many homes. It was a finer evening, and the biggest crowd of the week filled the stadium, while again on Thursday evening the attendance was high. Few of the thousands knew that from 6.45 Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent was in the Royal Retiring Room below the Royal Box, and that with her companions the Duchess took part in the whole service, only leaving the box in time to have a few words with Dr. Graham when the counselling had begun. The visit was private, and particular request was made that it should receive no official recognition. Her Royal Highness, as she left, declared, "This must be doing a great deal of good to our country. I am deeply impressed by all I have seen and witnessed here tonight."

Saturday

All too quickly the week drew to a close. On Saturday some twenty-five thousand gathered for the afternoon rally, the largest Saturday afternoon meeting (bar White City in 1954) the Team has known. In the evening the stadium was very full indeed, and the B.B.C. broadcast the

whole of Dr. Graham's address from 8.0 to 9.0 on the Light Programme. Dr. Graham expressed the appreciation of himself and his Team to the Committee, to Alderman Cyril Black, the treasurer (and to the Secretary, the writer of this account—*Editor*), to the Wembley officials, the police, the press, the B.B.C., the prayer partners, counsellors and stewards, the choir and the voluntary workers. Alderman Cyril Black told the huge congregation that the financial needs of the Crusade had been met, and that the last offering would be given to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Organisation towards their future work, as a token of gratitude for all they have done for us. The offering amounted to over £5,000, and was supplemented by gifts next day to over £6,000.

At about ten minutes to nine, under a calm clear evening sky, with the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack floating gently from the twin towers for the last time, Dr. Graham gave his final invitation; the crowd which responded was immense, almost filling the whole arena, and in a reverent silence Graham addressed them before the Bishop of Barking pronounced the Benediction on the whole Crusade.

Conclusion

In all, over twenty-three thousand had walked across that turf, to signify their desire to have Christ as their Lord and Saviour at the centre of their lives. With these committed to the care of the churches, the real work of Wembley has only just begun.

A few voiced their regret that Her Majesty the Queen should not have come herself to Wembley; Sunday morning saw the reason. Dr. and Mrs. Graham were the invited guests of Her Majesty at Windsor, lunching with the Royal Family after Dr. Graham had preached before them in the private chapel. There have been, and will continue to be, reports in the press which are derogatory to Dr. Graham and his ministry; letters of abuse and criticism continue to arrive. But to the churches of this country, Graham needs no defenders. He is among the ministers and preachers of the Gospel whom our Queen, with many of her subjects, has delighted to honour, while for him and his ministry among us, we give God praise and glory.