

Holy Trinity Church

At the beginning of the 19th century parish boundaries no longer reflected the realities of population growth and distribution but approval to erect new churches was fraught with difficulty. An Act of Parliament was required and proposals were vulnerable to objections from parishioners reluctant to contribute towards building costs through parish rates. Similar constraints did not apply to non-conformist chapels and so it was relatively easy for local landowner John Worsfold to found St John's Free Church on a piece of ground in 'The Furlongs' in 1840.

The popularity of the Chapel encouraged the view that although the population remained strongly attached to Church of England they were being driven into 'Sectarianism and Methodism' from the lack of places to worship belonging to the established church. As a result, by the middle of the century, changes in legislation and the establishment of the Church Building Society, had cleared the way for a major programme of church building across the country.

It was against this background that the Vicar of Dorking convened a meeting in the Girls National School Room in Dorking on 23rd March 1850 when potential subscribers were invited to appoint a Committee to superintend the building of a new church in Westcott. The committee included two local landowners, Charles Barclay of Bury Hill and Richard Fuller of The Rookery, who were to play major roles in the establishment of the new church. Dorking Solicitor, Charles Hart, was appointed Secretary and the meeting resolved that he should *wait upon the inhabitants of Dorking for contributions towards the new church, and that when sufficient funds were available Mr Gilbert Scott should be requested to furnish the Committee with plans and drawings for their inspection.*



An artist's impression of the proposed new church at Westcott

The committee went about its business with commendable enthusiasm. At a meeting held at Dorking Vicarage in the following week it was resolved that an approach should be made to Mr W J Evelyn, Lord of the Manor of Westcott, for permission to enclose a parcel of Common land not exceeding one acre on which to build the church. At subsequent weekly meetings it was reported that the site was agreed, subscriptions amounting to £1563 had been raised and the capacity of the church fixed at 275 persons¹. On the 8th May Gilbert Scott visited the site and took the opportunity to inspect Mr Fuller's pit to determine whether his offer to supply the stone required for the church was acceptable. All was well and Mr Scott was instructed to furnish plans in conformity with the church he had recently built at Sudbury². By mid-September his plans had been approved and in December working drawings and specifications were available for inspection by Messrs Bothwell and Shearburn, the two Dorking builders who had been invited to tender for the project. The successful bid was from William Shearburn in the sum of £1575.

In March 1851, a meeting of all the major (£50+) subscribers agreed to assign the Right of Patronage and the Nomination of the Minister to Charles Barclay and later that year he recorded in his diary on October 6th: *'At Morden and returned having secured the services of Mr Henry Seymour as clergyman to our new Church at Westcott.'* The next task was to find somewhere for him to live and after consulting Mr Evelyn and Richard Fuller, a piece of Bury Hill estate land was selected for the construction of a vicarage. An adjoining piece of land from the Rookery Estate was later to be provided for a village school, but that is another story³ since the school was not to be built until 1854.

By July 1851 a total of £2206 had been received towards the estimated total cost of £2500 and an appeal was made for the balance. This was accompanied by a sketch of the new church. Richard Fuller was the Treasurer and his detailed records show that there were a total of 150 subscribers. The Barclay family and their friends, including Lady Mary Leslie, Lady Elizabeth Wathen and Thomas Cubitt, the Fuller family and W J Evelyn were the major contributors, and the local clergy were all prevailed upon to subscribe. On a smaller scale there were contributions from parishioners in Dorking and Westcott. A secondary appeal was made to provide a memorial window to Lady Mary Leslie who had died in 1850 but who had left £1000 in her will to provide for the future maintenance of the new church. (The window was duly installed at the west end of the church but destroyed by a German bomb during the Second World War).

The construction of the church progressed through 1851 into 1852 and was completed in time for its consecration on 25th June by the Bishop of Winchester. (The Diocese of Guildford would not be created until 1927). One of the last tasks of the Committee was to prepare a scheme for the conduct of the Church. This included provision for the appointment of two churchwardens, the tasking of the Sexton and the setting of rents for Pews and Sitings (Annex B).

The Westcott Church Building Committee then concluded its business by presenting this report: *"The Committee appointed to superintend the building of the new Church are anxious to lay before the Subscribers a Statement Of their Accounts and to congratulate them and the Hamlet of Westcott on the completion of a Work which besides laying claim to no small share of architectural Beauty and affording Accommodation for 250 persons is constructed so as that at a comparatively small additional outlay arrangements may be made at any future time for supplying the increased wants of a growing population. That such a Building was required most unequivocal proof has been given by the very handsome Manner in which all Classes of the Community came*

¹ The population of the new parish was quoted as 700

² The building of the Church of St John the Evangelist in 1846 led to the creation of the parish of Wembley

³ Recounted in 'The History of Westcott School 1854-2004' published by the Westcott Local History Group

forward to assist in the excellent Work Although the Undertaking has not been completed without some Trouble Care and Anxiety yet the Committee feel more than repaid by the Success which has attended their Exertions. The Committee cannot conclude their Report without expressing their gratitude to all who have co-operated with them. "

The new church was well supported, so much so that arrangements were soon put in hand to increase its capacity by adding a south aisle. An application was made to the Incorporated Church Building Society for a grant of £205 towards the estimated £1,128 cost of increasing the seating capacity from 248 to 444. The Revd Seymour supported the application by pointing out that ‘*at present the adults sit in the seats that were intended for schoolchildren, the schoolchildren being ranged about the chancel and down the nave – indeed wherever we can squeeze them in. We propose to move them entirely to the seats under the west tower.*’ There were no drawings to accompany the application but a floor plan illustrated how the seating for 444 would be provided and confirming that the capacity of the pews conformed to approved guidelines (i.e. the pew width to be assumed for adults and children and the distance to be allowed between pews). Although the Society only granted £75 the project went ahead and the new aisle was formally opened on 29th October 1855. A condition of the grant was that a sign should record that ‘£75 was granted towards enlarging this church upon condition that 262 seats be reserved for the use of the poorer inhabitants of this parish.’ The framed wooden notice survived in the porch until 2001 when it was destroyed by vandals.

The vestry was originally located in the north chancel but in 1880 it was vacated to make way for the organ and a new, larger, vestry was built on the south side of the church. At the same time the chancel was re-ordered with the provision of new oak choir seats and reading desks, a new pulpit and lectern. All this was paid for by the Misses Barclay of Rokefield. 1880 also saw the introduction of gas lighting, renovation of the original ‘hot air warming apparatus’, repairs to the roof and to the Children’s Gallery etc. The cost of this work was met by subscriptions.

Miss Barclay continued to support the church. She commissioned the unusual mosaic (opus sectile) Reredos from James Powell & Son (Whitefriars) Limited⁴ in 1882 and the Commandment Panels a year later.

By this time the area around the church set aside for burials was filling up fast and in 1883 Mr Evelyn, the Lord of the Manor, was prevailed upon to grant a further piece of land to extend the original churchyard.

A Turret Clock was installed in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Jubilee.

On 7th January 1890 the Lych Gate was consecrated by the Bishop of Guildford. Later in the day Mrs Sumner, the Bishop’s wife and founder of the Mothers’ Union, spoke to the recently formed Westcott branch. She referred to “the unbounded possible influence of women over husbands and children – the crying need for better homes to check the awful evils of the time – the wisdom on a mother’s part of speaking frankly and fully as only a mother could to her daughters on the subjects of courtship and marriage – the importance of training children in obedience from the very cradle until at least three years old obedience was perfect – the duty of the prayerful dedication of children, and the keeping aloft from them of impure or unsuitable literature.”

⁴ Arthur Powell, the ‘stained glass’ partner of Whitefriars Glass lived at Milton Heath House

In January 1891, the then Vicar (Rev Lloyd), campaigned for a permanent memorial of the successful Mission held in the parish during the previous Lent, and suggested that an Iron Room should be established in that part of the village known as the 'Fields. A room in a cottage that was used as a Mission Room was far too small for the purpose. Mr Fuller kindly offered a site and the corrugated iron room was duly established close to the Pipp Brook at the bottom of St John's Road.

The outstanding window in the church is the beautiful east window depicting the Ascension. This came from Powells and was given by Miss Barclay of Rokefield in 1893. Several other stained glass windows and other memorials were installed during the 1890's and early 1900's. These included stained glass windows to Charles Sumner Maine of Brooklands (in 1888), Miss Emily Barclay (1892), the Marchioness of Hertford (also of Brooklands – in 1902) with a Memorial Brass paid for by her 43 grandchildren. Less exalted residents were also remembered especially Eliza Ottaway in 1903.

Although used for 'Mission Services' on Friday evenings and for weekly 'Mothers' Meetings' and for meetings of the Adult and Juvenile sections of the Temperance Society, correspondence in 1906 suggests that the Mission Room was not entirely satisfactory. The location at the bottom of St John's Road was inconvenient and not helped by the opening, in 1905, of a Sewage Pumping Station on the adjoining site to pump sewage from Westcott's new drainage system to sewage beds at the foot of Ranmore. Consideration was, therefore, given to the erection of a new and more commodious building closer to the centre of the village. Mr Barclay was persuaded to buy two of the 106 building plots that were then being advertised for sale in the new Watson Road but no further action was taken to replace the Iron Room.

In 1909 a glazed lobby was erected inside the north entrance 'to check the draught and improve the temperature of the church'. It was to remain for over 90 years. In the same year the organ was enlarged and improved in memory of Sir Thomas Paine of Broomfield.

In 1911 a new heating system was installed and we know that in 1915 the Organ Controller was adjusted because we have a copy of the manufacturer's 'blue print.'

In December 1918 a public meeting in the Reading Room recommended the construction of a village war memorial to the men who had died in the Great War. (The meeting also resulted in the erection of a YMCA Hut for the men who would shortly be coming back to their homes "It would be just the place for them, a place to spend their evenings instead of sitting at home, or in the public houses or walking aimlessly about the village.") In 1920 two war memorials were dedicated; the granite cross that faces you as you walk up to the church and the marble tablet on the south wall. This is unusual insofar as it depicts the regimental badges of those commemorated. This was not the first memorial to be placed in the church – three years earlier a representation of Watts' Happy Warrior 'made at Mr Watts place at Compton'⁵ was placed in the chancel in memory of 2nd Lt Burnet Geake of Woodlands in Coast Hill Lane.

It is known that Watts' work was fashionable at that time because there are some examples still to be found in Broomfield Park. By this time Broomfield was the home of Sir George Touche who had the Touche memorial erected in 1918 in memory of his wife Jessie. It has since been inscribed to record several other members of the Touche family.

⁵ Now the Watt's Gallery

By now even the enlarged churchyard was nearly full. Earlier, in 1910 it had been proposed that the area of common land lying to the east side of the church should be sought from Mr Evelyn for use as an additional graveyard. The Lord of the Manor gave his consent, but only on the understanding that there was no objection to the proposal in the village. In the event the matter raised considerable passion and for several weeks the letters pages of the Dorking Advertiser reported the strongly held views of those who felt that it was quite wrong to utilise Common land in this way and others who were concerned at the cost and inconvenience should it be necessary to bury Westcott dead in Dorking Town cemetery. In the event the scheme did not proceed (because no interment can take place within 100 yards of any dwelling house without consent of the owner and occupier, and one of the 18 individuals approached objected). The problem was resolved in 1916 when Lt Col Robin Barclay gave the church an acre of Bury Hill estate land in memory of his father who had died in 1913. He also undertook to give a further acre when what became the Extension Churchyard on the other side of Logmore Lane to the south of the church, was full. This promise was honoured by his executors after his death in 1952 and the field in question is currently let until such time as it is required. One half of the extension churchyard was consecrated for burials in July 1928, and the eastern area that is currently being used was consecrated in November 1977.

Whilst the land was not required for burials some of it was put to good use as Church Allotments on condition, according to the letting agreement, that the land was 'used for proper cultivation by spade husbandry and was not worked on a Sunday.'

In 1936 a side chapel was created in the south east corner with an altar and fittings including carved wooden angels brought from Oberamgau by a member of the congregation.

In 1940 the church narrowly escaped serious damage from enemy bombing but most of the windows were blown out, including the memorial window to Lady Mary Leslie at the west end of the church which was damaged beyond repair. The Mission Room was another casualty of the war when it was damaged beyond repair by blast from the bomb that demolished three houses and killed 9 people in Watson Road in January 1944.

In November 1945, Lt Col Barclay convened a small committee to provide a suitable memorial for those Servicemen who did not return and for those who died as a result of enemy bombing. It was not a straightforward task; there were delays during the design stage as a result of consultation with the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry before a faculty was grudgingly granted in June 1951 and a local craftsman, Mr Ashby of Bailey Road, was commissioned to construct the memorial. Although originally intended for the south wall it was eventually unveiled at the back of the church in March 1954. Another 45 years would pass before being moved to the location for which it had been originally designed.

Mr Ashby's woodworking skills were called upon again in 1961 when he was invited to make and inscribe a font cover, in similar wood to the Oak that he had used for the war memorial, in memory of the Fison sisters of Tile House.

Meanwhile, in 1956 at a time when new houses were appearing in Springfield road and at The Burrell, the PCC purchased the Old Pumping Station site at the far end of St John's Road, with a view to using it, and the adjacent Mission Room site, for a new community centre.

In 1958 it was necessary to replace the church organ and the PCC were advised to reposition it on the gallery at the back of the church.

In 1964 the appearance of the sanctuary was changed when stencilled decoration on the east wall was 'limewashed' and a short while later a 'children's corner' was established. This made five pews redundant and these were given to the school. 1964 also saw a major new development - the first Stewardship Campaign. This opened with a Parish Supper attended by nearly 250 people at Dorking Halls and was followed by the active involvement of 50 parishioners, 25 Hostesses and an equal number of Men Visitors, whose task was to seek a financial and spiritual response from the village. The venture was remarkably successful and had some far-reaching results.

Several young people joined the church and wanted somewhere to meet. At this time the original Reading Room was very dilapidated and the Church negotiated a deal with the Trustees whereby the PCC contributed £6500 towards the £8,500 construction of a new building and in return assumed day-to-day control of what became, in effect, a Church Hall. £1750 of the PCC's contribution came from the sale of the Mission Room and Old Pumping Station sites which the local authority wanted for additional housing and which the church now no longer required.

Other developments attributable to the 1964 Stewardship campaign included:

- A Westcott Church Car Service(!) to help people to get to church and subsequently extended to provide a Hospital Car Service to help parishioners who needed to get to hospital either for treatment or to visit.
- The appointment of Parish Stewards to identify new arrivals, departures, sickness and bereavement within the village. They also had a remit to invite all village newcomers to an annual Harvest Supper.
- Fortnightly Coffee Mornings were introduced in March 1966, and later in that year a Youth Club was started.

The Stewardship Committee continued to meet and in 1971 they were instrumental in raising the funds needed to restore the organ to its place in the north chancel after an unhappy spell on the gallery at the back of the church.

Although the generosity of the Barclay sisters is still remembered by virtue of the trust they established in January 1893 to maintain the Reading Room, few people now recall that at the same time they established a Curacy House Trust whereby a house was provided on the site next door to the Reading Room for the benefit of a curate or lay worker. In the 1930's the church found that it could not afford a curate and during the Second World War the house was let at a nominal rent. After the war Government legislation decreed that this was a controlled rent property and the Churchwardens, as trustees, were powerless to impose an economic rent, with the result that the house fell into disrepair. In 1971 the Charity Commissioners agreed to the sale of the house on the understanding that the proceeds (£7500) were invested and the income used for religious or charitable work in the parish. The Curacy House Trust still features in the annual accounts

There have been other examples of charitable giving. In 1925 Dr Maw, who lived at The Elms, now The Old House, next to the Westcott Newsagency bequeathed £100 to be invested and the income used to give the 14 most deserving choirboys with an annual gift of two shillings and sixpence each, to be presented by the Vicar after morning service on Christmas Day. In 1976, the churchwardens were obliged to advise the Charity Commission that although these provisions were faithfully observed initially it was no longer possible to comply with Dr Maw's instructions and the trust was wound up.

The increased acceptance of cremation instead of burial led to the provision of a Garden of Remembrance on the western side of the path through the churchyard, for which a faculty was

granted in August 1965 'on the understanding that memorial stones will be affixed to walls and not placed on the ground'. It proved popular and in 1969 a north wall was added. Later, in 1989, a second 'Garden' was constructed on the east side of the path.

In 1965 it was necessary to replace the shingles on the south and west side of the spire and the opportunity was taken to regild the weathercock.

50 years of scouting in Westcott was commemorated in November 1974 by the provision of a bench by the Lych Gate.

In 1981, following a review of the future needs of the church, an appeal was made for funds to improve the vestry by double glazing the inner window to reduce the noise from the Sunday School, by blocking up the chimney breasts and fitting new cupboards, and by installing a sink and a toilet draining to a septic tank just outside the Lych Gate. This work was carried out but other improvements did not materialise. The move of the porch door to the open outer end of the porch, with new inner doors to replace the 1909 vestibule, was deferred and a proposal to move the font to the south aisle to free up the back of the church to provide a larger meeting place and display area was abandoned.

Other developments in the 1980's included the conversion of the central heating to gas in 1983, the building of the Upper room above the vestry in 1985 and new church lighting in 1986. The church was re-roofed in two stages, the first half in 1986 and the remainder in 1990.

The 140th anniversary in 1992 was marked by a flower Festival. By this time the PCC was less interested in having a Church Hall than had been the case thirty years earlier; preferring to concentrate on providing 'More Space' at the church to meet the needs of the Sunday School etc. As a result, in 1993 the PCC relinquished its controlling interest in the Reading Room.

The new Millennium was marked by the floodlighting the church each evening, a practice which continues, and by an 'open church' policy whereby the building remains unlocked during daylight hours.

2002 saw the installation, at long last, of new porch doors, the refurbishment and enhancement of the organ and the glazing of the Lady Chapel. The latest developments have included the repositioning of the font from underneath the west end gallery to allow a separate room to be established, and the replacement of some of the old pews by modern chairs to provide flexibility in the use of the church, as well as greater comfort.

The Parochial Church Council have recently adopted the motto; *Growing as a Christian Community, serving the village of Westcott*. This objective has led to the inclusion of the St John's Free Church as part of the parish church responsibilities following the closure of the Chapel in 2003 by the trustees of The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.

Holy Trinity has been serving the village for over 150 years during which time the parish registers record that there have been 3,350 Baptisms, 1,140 Weddings and 2,200 Burials.

Vicars of Westcott

Rev Henry Seymour	1852-1864
Rev Sir John Caesar Hawkins Bt	1864-1866
Rev William Henry Kerslake	1866-1882
Rev William Richard Lloyd	1882-1894
Rev Alfred Duncan Woolley	1894-1910
Rev Frederick Henry Salzmann	1910-1944
Rev Henry Lea Birch	1945-1950
Rev Richard Gregory	1950-1956
Rev Richard Jeans	1956-1959
Rev Douglas Samuel Curry	1959-1976
Rev John Derek Henry Weyman	1976-1997

Priests in Charge

Rev Alan Charles Jonas	1998 –2022
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