

A
Permanent
Church

A Short History of
St. Andrew's Church, Orpington
1893-1993

A Permanent Church

“At the invitation of the Vicar a few gentlemen met on Friday evening, July 5th at the Vicarage, to consider the long-mooted subject of a permanent Church in the place of St Andrew’s.

The meeting was not large, as the day did not suit some gentlemen who were otherwise willing to take interest in the matter, but the case for a new Church was fully set forth and considered.”

That was in 1889. It was the beginning of our St. Andrew’s.

A Tin Pot in Top Road

The original St. Andrew’s was an iron-built Mission Hall referred to locally as The Old Tinpot. It had been erected in the time of the Reverend William Gardner, Vicar of Orpington from 1869 to 1877, serving the dual purpose of district church and day school in what was becoming the most populous part of the parish.

The census of 1881 showed Orpington as having only 3,000 inhabitants; and in 1891 it was only a thousand more. But of these, 2,000 lived in what is now St. Andrew’s parish; 1,500 or so in The Low Town, or The Building Fields, as the area between the top of the High Street and Kent Road was called, another 500 in the new settlement called Fordcroft – or more popularly, Sloper’s Island. The construction of the railway line from Lewisham Junction to Tonbridge meant that many navvies had to be brought in to make the embankments and cuttings and the tunnels at Chelsfield and Polhill. They settled here and St. Andrew’s was built to provide for their spiritual welfare and for the education of their children. It was built on the site of what is now the Parish Hall in Anglesea Road, or Top Road – Wellington Road was Middle Road and Lower Road, Bottom Road – not long after the area was laid out for houses. The school which had been held in the Tinpot was closed when the Board School in Wellington Road was opened sometime during the incumbency of the Reverend E.F. Dyke, between 1877 and 1883, but overflow classes were being held in St. Andrew’s Parish Hall when the Wellington Road School was closed in 1966.

The fact that many of the railway labourers were Irish and came to St. Andrew’s in the absence of a Roman Catholic Church may to some extent account the High Church flavour from the outset: but it might also have been due to the influence of William Stanley Allen Esquire, a Lay Reader and benefactor of St. Andrew’s, and of those like him who were strongly affected by the Catholic Movement in the Church of England at that time. A village parish church, like All Saints Orpington, had to present a moderate and conventional front; daughter churches and district chapelries were often places where the more exotic or dogmatic assistant curates could have their fling. They had Festal Evening Prayer in The Old Tinpot, the Reverend Mr. Jackman, curate-in-charge, delivered talks on ‘The One, Holy,

Catholic, Apostolic Church', and on Good Friday in 1888 there was 'Stations of the Cross' for children – all indications of tendencies.

The iron St. Andrew's was well-attended. It had an organist and a choir of six men and twelve boys. The Harvest Festival in 1883 was described as "crowded", whilst 80 were present in Church the following Thursday, filling the building. On Christmas Day in 1885 there were only nine communicants and the collection amounted to just one shilling (5p). The Vicar, the Reverend J. Newton Heale described the attendance at Evensong as "Disgracefully few, and scarcely any choir." But on Easter Day in 1887 there were thirty-eight communicants at 6.30 a.m. (no evening communions then) and the collection came to 5s 6½d (about 28p). at this time, the average wage of a farm labourer was between 15/- (75p) and a pound a week; the railway navvies (or navigators) and the millhands might earn about twice as much.

The old Mission Hall in Anglesea Road has not sunk without trace entirely; the enamelled roundels of the Agnus Dei and the Pelican in her piety feeding her young with her own blood (a symbol of Christ in the Holy Communion) are now on the west wall of our St. Andrew's; and an oval plaque with HIS is on the wall of the north aisle, remembrancers of the first St. Andrew's Orpington.

The Bazaar

By 1887 it was being felt that a bigger and more suitable building was needed, and in July of that year a three-day bazaar was held in the grounds of The Priory (by kind permission of B.J. Lake Esq.) to raise funds "for providing a New and Permanent Church in the place of the present Iron Erection of St. Andrew's, and also a New Mission Church for the district of Crofton, Orpington." In those days, a Bazaar was a Bazaar, a Thursday, Friday and Saturday of stalls, side-shows and entertainments. Amongst the many intriguing attractions, flowers and fancy work and strawberries with cream, there was a Doll Stall which advertised a walking doll. "Those intending a pedestrian tour on their holidays will find her a most charming companion. Her average speed of progression – three moles an hour – may be compared with advantage with the speed of express trains on the S.E.R." If bazaars were more impressive then it seems the railways were not. There were other delights, the Cray Temperance Band, with a programme of quadrilles, schottisches and polkas, Tableaux Vivants of Sleeping Beauty and The Land of the Rising Sun, and 'The Old Bredden Nigger Show' which offended no-one then. However, "a lady who did some classical dancing with bare feet created a little horrified surprize." The Bazaar raised £217.

'Sub Rosa'

'The Committee for the Building of the New Church of St. Andrew, Orpington' under the chairmanship of the Reverend J. Newton Heale met in August 1889 to

select “six architects who should be invited to submit plans under certain conditions” for the new building; the closing date to be St. Andrew’s Day, November 30th, 1890. Mr. James Brooks F.R.I.B.A., an eminent architect, was nominated assessor, and five sets of plans were duly submitted under anonymous mottoes –

Sub Rosa
Flints
St. Andrews X
Brick and Stone
Veritas.

It was the first, a pseudonym concealing the identity of Messrs Hyde and Newberry of 121, Bishopsgate Street, which was declared winner, although Mr. Brooks added this note to his judgement:

“Had I been at liberty to ignore the conditions of the competition.
And left out the cost, I should have placed this design (St. Andrews X)
the first in order of merit.”

So, St. Andrew’s set out with its second-best foot forward. Perhaps it is as an allusion to the name ‘Sub Rosa’ that there is carved at the point where the arch mouldings meet on the south side of the choir arcade, a symbolic rose: the architect’s signature. But the architect having been appointed and the design approved, it remained to raise the money.

A Corner Stone Laid

In May 1890, a printed pamphlet was circulated bearing a picture of a brick church in the Early English style, with an imposing tower and spire at the west end, and “an earnest appeal... for help towards the erection of a Church to be known as St. Andrew’s, in the poorer and more thickly populated part of Orpington.” The estimated cost of the building to hold 630 persons was £5,000, although to build a part only in order to meet the “very crying necessity” would cost but £3,000, of which £1,700 had been promised. By July 1891, the Building Committee felt justified in asking for tenders. The lowest was from Messrs Shillitoe and Son, for £2,950 but when it came to the point they declined to enter into the contract and Messrs Norris and Son of Sunningdale, who had quoted £2,971, were given the work.

What was described as ‘a convenient site’ had been obtained on what had been part of the old Mayfield estate in Bottom Road, and on Saturday April 30th, 1892 at 12.30 p.m., the Corner Stone was laid there by the Earl Stanhope, Lord Lieutenant of Kent. The local clergy were invited to robe at the Iron Church (“If wet in the shed on the building site”); but it must have been a fine day, and the procession moved off from Anglesea Road led by Canon Murray, the Rural Dean. And to appropriate

psalms, hymns and prayers the ceremony was punctually performed. Under the Corner Stone was buried a tin box containing copies of the Orpington Church Magazine, a list of subscribers to the building fund, some bronze and gold coins and – since Mr. William Allen was a member of the firm which published the works of John Ruskin, the author and critic – a copy of that writer's 'Seven Lamps of Architecture', in which are laid down the principles that should govern art: Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience. What surer foundations could any church have?

It had been agreed that Mr. Jackman, the assistant curate, should ask some of the parishioners of Orpington "to lend their carriages for meeting visitors coming by the trains." And a luncheon for eighty people in the Village Hall followed the stone laying ceremony, for which "it was considered desirable to issue tickets for admission to the gallery at the Village Hall and to distribute tickets admitting to the luncheon some of the Orpington tradesmen."

The bricks that were used in the building were made in a brick field at St. Paul's Cray; the stonework was cut from blocks of stone brought to the site. As the Church was built on a pond and the land was full of springs it was not necessary to lay on mains water for the builders. So, once started, the work went swimmingly, but to help the finances along a 'Fancy Fair and Illuminated Fete' was held in the grounds of Effingham Lodge (by kind permission of E.H. Joynson Esq.)

The opening ceremony was performed by the Lady Augusta Pratt on Wednesday, August 3rd, 1892, who received a bouquet from the Vicar's daughter. The Light Refreshment Stall "with its charming suggestion of a Pagoda! Tea in a separate teapot for two, with bread and butter... purchasable at the moderate price of eighteen pence," was such a masterpiece that the stall was raffled off at the end of the Bazaar. The Doll and Tobacco Stall in "Oxford and Cambridge colours" was manned by the curates and bore the ambiguous comment "Dolls are sometimes necessary to the happiness even of grown-up children." And once again an impressive programme of entertainments, including this time, "Spanish Serenaders in their National Costume," a Fortune Teller 'In the Witch's Cave', and "Mr. Fleming Norton in his Mimical and Musical Entertainment", ended each day. And there was punting ('corners suitable for spoons') on the River Cray.

The £3,000 Version

The Church was ready for Consecration by Dr. G.R. Eden, the Lord Bishop of Dover – for at that time Orpington was within the Diocese of Canterbury – on May 24th, 1893, and although it had only been possible to erect the £3,000 version, with a temporary west wall against the day when enough money could be raised to complete the project in accordance with the original plan, yet there was much to be proud of in the new building. The very handsome choir stalls with their beautifully modelled poppy heads were carved in oak cut down in Lullingstone Great Park and

given by Sir William Hart Dyke. The altar was made of cedar from Chevening, the gift of Lord Stanhope. And the organ, built by John Walker and Sons in 1890 with “one manual, and pedal pipe, eight speaking stops, oak casing and one coupler” was said to have come from the hall of a large house in Wales. But photographs taken in 1911 show that there was no pulpit in the Church at that time. Perhaps the funds available for furnishing were not sufficient to cover the cost of the elaborately pillared, carved and panelled article for which a design by the architect remains in the Churchwardens’ Chest; and perhaps a pulpit was thought to be expendable anyway. However, in 1924 application was made for a faculty to install a pulpit designed by Mr. Heaton Comym A.R.I.B.A. It was thought at the time to be a temporary expedient until a better one could be afforded, but it is still in the Church. In the faculty application the shells on the upper panels of the pulpit were described as ‘oysters’. The secretary of the Diocesan Advisory Committee tactfully pointed out in his reply that “the scallop shell, not the oyster” was the pilgrim’s badge. On the other hand, it may be that whoever wrote the application had in mind the contemporary catch phrase, “Did you ever see an oyster walk upstairs?” which was addressed to someone who had been telling tall stories about his own experiences, so perhaps they were oysters after all!

The half-finished building with its very temporary looking West Wall must have had a rather uncomfortable appearance: the truncated nave seeming disproportionately wide enough for its length. Yet the interior has an impressive simplicity which became fully apparent when the Church was eventually finished. From the beginning the bare brick interior was relieved and brightened by a number of pictures and paintings. The inventory of 1912 records a painting of St. Andrew, the gift of the Reverend J. Newton Heale, in the Lady Chapel; and by 1922, the date of the next inventory we have, the Church was also adorned by a painting of Calvary, the gift of Colonel B.G. Lake of The Priory: a reproduction of ‘The Light of the World’ by Holman Hunt, and one of Leonardo Da Vinci’s ‘Last Supper’, both given anonymously; whilst also now in the Lady Chapel was a picture of ‘Our Lady’ given by Mr. Allen, a Head of Christ, St. Veronica, and ‘The Good Shepherd’.

Some Enthusiastic Curates

St. Andrew’s rejoiced not only in the visual arts, drama too had its place – although not its profits. The Nativity Play in 1923 showed a deficit of £2. 4s. and in 1925 a disastrous £16. Fortunately, the Rummage Sales were more successful. One in December 1919 raised £26. 6s. 4d, enough to enable the Curate to order 30 new Manuals of Plainsong, to go with the 200 new Hymn Books – Ancient and Modern with two supplements – which it had been found necessary to buy for the growing congregation.

The Registers show that under a succession of enthusiastic curates St. Andrew’s was a lively district Church. The services in the new building had mostly been taken at first by the Reverend J.F. Groves. During the next twenty-five years Mr.

Curgenven was followed by Mr. Heyland and the Reverend A.F. Stantiall; then came J. Fraser, W.S. Evans, F.W. Simms, W.E. Spicer and, in 1927, the Reverend E.G. Pratt, who left in 1934 to become Vicar of Darenth, and was succeeded by the Reverend E.G.R. Hougham who was to be the first Vicar of St. Andrew, Orpington. These were men who did so much to establish the Church and set in good ways by their lives and doctrine. But as well as the services there was an annual programme of social events “to be held with a view to bringing our people more closely together.” A typical list of arrangements for the year 1929-30 included Whist Drives at the Parsonage (very popular), a Band of Hope Prize giving (which was followed by an excursion to The Five Bells), a Ramble to Downe, a Lantern Lecture by Mr. Venn, and ‘Mrs. Robins’s Concert.’

Yet, if during its first quarter century the permanent Church in Lower Road was making its mark locally, it seems to have been less well known at the Diocesan Office in Rochester. A plea for a grant to help with necessary repairs in 1929 received a reply from the Archdeacon,

“We want to husband the resources of the City Parochial Charities... Is your St. Andrew’s Hall a permanent building? I had an idea it was an iron room, and very much doubt whether this Fund would be available for anything but a permanent building.”

Oh well! St. Andrew’s had only been standing for 36 years by then; and Archdeacons are very busy men.

“Wide was his Parish”

The population of Orpington had continued to grow and it was decided to make the area around St. Andrew’s a separate parish. This was done by an Order in Council “At the Court at Buckingham Palace” on December 20th, 1934 and Gazetted on the 21st. And on Monday 11th February 1935, the Reverend E.G.R. Hougham was Instituted to the living. In his sermon at the Institution Bishop Linton Smith quoted the example of the Parson “rich in holy thoughts and works” in Chaucer’s ‘Canterbury Tales’.

“Wide was his parish, with houses far asunder,
Yet he neglected not in rain or thunder,
In sickness, or in trouble, to pay call
On the remotest whether great or small
Upon his feet, and in his hand a stave.
A noble example to the sheep he gave...”

But before he could enter fully on his pastoral work, the new Vicar had to set other things in order and equip St. Andrew’s for its new task as a Parish Church.

A safe had to be procured "to contain the various documents and books which would be required in view of the creation of the new parish of St. Andrew's." It cost £3.10s (the cartage was 4/9d with a 2/- tip for the carrier).

Registers had to be obtained; and the wedding fees were fixed at 7/6d for the Vicar, 3/6d for the Churchwardens and 2/7d for the certificate. "This", reads the minutes of the Parochial Church Council, "was considered a very satisfactory apportionment." And "in order to raise the tone of the choir it was suggested that affiliation to the School of English Church Music was very desirable." So far so good, but the state of the building itself had to be considered.

The temporary west end of the Church had been troublesome for some time. Complaints had been made about the draughts under the porch doors, and it was an embarrassment that the existing porch and lobby were too small "to admit a funeral cortege in a sufficiently revered manner." It would seem that the building had been somewhat neglected by its parent parish. In a letter to the diocese written shortly after his induction the new Vicar said,

- “1. The present temporary end has been in position for 44 years and has reached a period when its condition is one for concern. It should be realised that this end is timber and plaster.
2. The church in its present condition was made by an Order in Council into the parish Church of The District Chapelry of St. Andrew. This was done at the end of 1934...

Thus, the parish of Orpington were (*sic*) responsible for the condition of this Church until the date of the formation of a new parish. Everything in the Church has had to be renewed – altar linen, choir cassocks and surplices, hymn books – the roof has just been repaired. During this first year we have already spent near £100 on absolute necessities.”

An approach was made to Mr. David Nye A.I.A.A. to put a timber addition with a shingle roof at the west end, this to include a porch for normal use and an emergency door and a cupboard. As the PCC memorandum put it,

“The Church is not something to be propped up but a building for use. It is essential that everything possible is done to get rid of its present dejected and dilapidated appearance.”

However, it had to be recognised that the possibilities were limited.

“In view of the probable heavy cost of providing a new entrance at the present time and the need for conserving Church Funds as much as possible, it was resolved to repair the present porch and entrance, and a new door had already been fixed which was suitable for the purposes of admitting funeral corteges.”

Any hopes that the building might one day be completed with its tower and spire were dashed when the land adjoining the Church was sold by the Vicar of Orpington to a dairy for £250. The PCC wrote to the Bishop to express their disquiet at what seemed to them a rather high-handed action on the part of the Reverend Mr. Osborne, who had already upset them by reversing his earlier decision to remit the burial fees for St. Andrew's parishioners to the Vicar of the new parish. But Bishop Linton Smith replied crushingly,

“I think that our Church Council is labouring under a misapprehension, The land on which the dairy stands was never part of the site of St. Andrew's Church; it was part of the glebe belonging to the benefice of Orpington; from that glebe a piece of land was given for the site of the Church, and the result of my enquiries is that the Church can be completed on the existing site. The disposal of the land for the benefit of the living of Orpington was a perfectly legitimate! transaction. Consequently for the Church Council to speak of ‘the loss of this land’ is entirely inaccurate.

I hope the possession of these facts will finally settle the matter.”

Put down but undaunted St. Andrew's went on to make the best of what it had. Proposals were advanced for electric light fittings and new altar rails. But these were rejected by the Faculty Committee. Mr. Hougham's reply to the Secretary of the Diocesan Advisory Committee's suggestion that they were not suitable showed that the friction which sometimes occurs between incumbent and D.A.C. is no novelty.

“I am afraid I cannot resist the impression that at least your sub-Committee regards the parish priest as an incompetent and bungling Amateur who must always be wrong... If I am to be expected to go on Supplying designs and plans until I finally hit on a plan that satisfies your committee it would be much better for me to drop the idea of trying to improve St. Andrew's Church.”

But he did not drop it. Electric light fittings which cost £50.10s. were installed by The Crays Electrical Co. in 1936. And they, or something very like the ‘Pearl stone’ shades, reminiscent of the middling sort of Edwardian Public Lavatory, remained until the present architect-designed light fittings were obtained through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. George Kirk, in 1991.

A set of six candlesticks for funerals was bought – and still used. Even a ‘bath chair’ for the use of invalids appeared in the porch. (This was kept in the boiler house in 1966 but disappeared shortly afterwards when lent to somebody then unknown to the incumbent at that time, to wheel home an inebriated relative from ‘The Beech Tree’). And in 1938 the Scouts were allowed to erect a cabin (the Old Scout Hut) on the waste ground at the rear of the church for a nominal rent of 2/6d per annum.

“The Sanction of Authority”

In 1938 there was a new Vicar, the Reverend Trevor Rees. Perhaps it was to celebrate this auspicious event that the organ blower's wage was raised from 15/- a quarter to £1; at which sum it stayed until an electric blower was put in in 1948 at approximately the cost of 21 years wages for the one-manpower model. But there were other innovations and improvements proposed and accomplished. In October 1939 “an offer to provide altar rails to the Side Chapel and a statue to be given in memory of the late Mr. W.S. Allen” was made, although the PCC decided to postpone application for faculties for these and The Reservation of The Blessed Sacrament “until more normal times”. It appears, though, that the Reservation was an accomplished fact even as the meeting discussed seeking permission for it, since the same minutes record “the heartfelt thanks of the PCC for the blessing bestowed upon the Church of St Andrew by the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.” Legality was restored the following year when the new Bishop of Rochester, Christopher Chevasse, authorised the Reservation “during the period of the War”, and in a letter to the Vicar observed with characteristic irony, “You will be glad to feel that what you now do has the sanction of authority.”

The question of a permanent memorial to Mr. Allen, who had died in April 1939, remained outstanding. In August 1940 it was felt the matter could be delayed no longer. A subscription fund for friends and associates was opened, and it was decided that a new font, suitably inscribed, should be obtained. And that is what was done. The old font which must have been hopelessly inadequate, is now used as a holy water stoup. It too has been inscribed, but unsuitably, by visiting vandals.

In 1948 it was proposed that a faculty be sought for a statue of the Virgin and Child. One which cost £50 was bought out of Parish Funds and placed on a bracket on the south side of the Chancel arch, where it stood until it was moved into the Lady Chapel at the re-decoration of 1967.

“You can go Forward in Courage”

After the First World War the Bishop of Rochester, Bishop Harmer, had set up a '12 Churches Fund' in the diocese to provide Churches to meet the spiritual needs of the new housing areas of West Kent, of which Orpington was one. By 1936, in the new parish of St. Andrew's alone there were 1,500 new houses divided between three building estates. The coming of the railways had effectively turned Orpington from “a pretty little village of a few houses irregularly built, (and) a dense mass of gigantic walnut trees” into one of the first dormitory suburbs. And after the Second War the population was further increased by those who had been bombed-out of East London during the Blitz and found new homes here. The government policy of Zoning, and a general tendency to move people and industry out of the cities and into the suburbs, virtually killed London as a living community, and destroyed the countryside by over-building in unsympathetic styles. In 1953 the

population of Orpington was cited as 66,000, and in that year a committee was appointed by the Bishop to investigate the position of the Church generally, and particularly in regard to the post-war increase in the number of inhabitants. St. Andrew's Church was in a very poor state of repair and would need a considerable amount of money to be spent on it to make it a practical proposition as a parish church. Added to which was the difficulty created by the main road cutting the parish in half, separating the new housing estate on the far side from the Church and the Parish Hall. As the size of the parish at the time was estimated at 10,000 souls it was clear that something must be done.

What was suggested was that a new church should be built on the high ground the other side of the by-pass, and as the parish of St. Andrew, Orpington had been carved out of the old parish of All Saints, so it should be reabsorbed, and the new church be a daughter Church with a resident priest-in-charge. The first choice of site was in Robin Hood Green. That gave place to a plot in Poverest Road, where the Christ Lutheran Church now stands. But by October 1954 the Diocesan Reorganisation Committee was claiming that the Poverest site had never been considered big enough for more than a Church Hall with Parsonage House as it was too near St. Francis, Petts Wood (one of Bishop Harmer's original 12 churches) for a district Church. As it turned out the Urban District Council refused planning permission on the grounds that it was intended that shops should be built there, and the site was inappropriate for a Church.

Fortunately it was realised that the sensible thing to do was to put St. Andrew's back into good order. An architect, Mr. C.W. Fowler, F.R.I.B.A., was commissioned to produce drawings for the addition of another bay at the West end, together with a Narthex type of entrance (a combination of porch and meeting room). A Parish Room was originally intended as part of the new extension but proved too expensive. The choice of architect was a happy link with the original building for, as Mr. Fowler wrote to the Reverent Gerald Tyers, the Vicar at the time, "St. Andrews... was the first Church built by my late partner." And his addition to it has been attached with an all but seamless join.

Mr. Tyers said in his letter in the Parish Magazine for December 1955,

"St. Andrew's, which has stood, somewhat pathetically, unfinished for the best part of 63 years, is to be completed. Soon now building operations by James Longley and Co. will commence by the end of the year, St Andrew's, more beautiful and more worthy, will begin a new lease of life."

Unfortunately, when the builders began work, they found some of the old timbers suffering from dry rot. This infestation was duly dealt with, but strangely enough, just at about the time of the Consecration of the completed Church, the film showing the Commodore Cinema was 'Dry Rot', with Ronald Shiner, Brian Rix and Peggy Mount. There has been trouble with rot in the roof timbers on two occasions since then.

The Bishop of Rochester, Dr, Chavasse, said in his consecration sermon on November 24th, 1956,

“You can go forward in courage, called to be a missionary Church to all these streets of houses growing up all around you.”

He also observed,

“It is unfortunate that the cost of the completion (£15,000) which was more than the cost of the whole Church originally, has now to be found.”

But found it was. Mainly by the institution of The Building Fund, which under the leadership of Mr. Cyril Reeves organised a visitation of the parish to solicit regular donations; as well as by the customary money-raising events – Garden Parties, Jumble Sales, even on one occasion, a concert by Bexley Ballet Group.

The completion was celebrated by a ‘Festival Week’, with a Special Thanksgiving Service on the Sunday, A Grand Whist Drive on the Tuesday, An Evening of One Act Plays, A Concert by the Boys of St. Mary of the Angels Song School, A Celebration Country Dance, and on Saturday December 1st, A Parish Party. Everyone seems to have got back to normal by Sunday evening. The Vicar, speaking to the PCC shortly after, voiced his “grave concern at the pitifully small congregation at Evensong on Sundays and stressed the importance of the Church Council to give the congregation the necessary lead. The Council agreed to give the congregation the necessary lead. The Council agreed with all that Father Tyers had said.”

And so St. Andrew’s took on the shape and size we now know.

An Austere Dignity

The Church got its new altar rails at last through the benefaction of ‘an anonymous family in the parish’ in June 1956. The original design from ‘Faith Craft Works Ltd.’ of Westminster had more balusters than is now the case. The present rather sparse arrangement, which has the look of some of the balusters having been left out, was due to the request by the PCC for ‘a simplified version’, presumably to fit the amount of money available.

In 1954, a Dramatic Society was formed. Its first production was ‘Little Women’ in February of that year. It seems to have disappeared from the scene after ‘Arsenic and Old Lace’ two years later, but during its lifetime it raised enough money to provide the carpet for the Lady Chapel – a very appropriate gift from those who had been ‘treading the boards’.

Before the completion work was begun, in 1953, Mr. McMaster, a dealer in prints and antiques and an active member of the St. Andrew's community, had arranged for The Stations of the Cross and all other pictures in the Church to be cleaned and reframed. Unfortunately, after the completion, the pictures, which had hung in the Church for so long, disappeared. The Stations of the Cross did not.

It was also recorded at that time that the gifts of a barrel organ and a hurdy-gurdy had been made to the Church. But although it appears that they were still available for letting out to various organisations in April 1956, these interesting instruments seem to have disappeared in the excitement over the Church Completion Scheme.

Although the completed St. Andrew's had an austere dignity, the impression given by the unrelieved brick interior was undeniably sombre. The harmonious use of colour is a great uplifter of the spirit, and in February 1963 the incumbent, the Reverend J.C. Allen, asked a well-known firm of church decorators and restorers – Kirkland Bridge – to look at the church and advise on a scheme to beautify and lighten the chancel and Lady Chapel. This envisaged whitening the walls of the chancel and painting the walls and roof of the chapel in 'Our Lady Blue'. The reredos and canopy above the High Altar would be finished in "attractive heraldic colours with some small relief in gold". This pleasing, if conventional and slightly 'twee' décor would cost about £500, and it was felt that as the parish was still paying off the debt on the completion work, it was too much. And there things rested, until three years later when a new incumbent arrived in the parish and found that a bequest of £1,500, to be spent at the bequest of the Vicar and Churchwardens, had put a more ambitious decoration of the Church in the parish's reach.

Miss Phillips's Bequest

Miss Mabel Phillips had been present at the Consecration of St. Andrew's in 1893. It was very appropriate that the money she left should be used to adorn and beautify the building, and to intensify the sense of mystery and dignity which should surround the worship of God. The artist and designer of the new scheme was Mr. Alan Cooper who had had experience in both stage and church work. He was the Chancel and Sanctuary as a setting in which the drama of Redemption is played out through the Holy Communion and the Offices of the Church. The centrepiece of the decoration is the mural painting on the East Wall, executed on a ground of raw sienna in order to echo and harmonise with the brick. It shows St. Andrew presenting a model of his fishing boat to the infant Jesus, who sits on his mother's lap, while St. Joseph stands behind. The vistas through the arches on either side, opening on to formal landscapes, illustrate four scenes in the Apostle's life. Following John the Baptist. The calling of Andrew to be a fisher of men. The feeding of the Five Thousand. And Introducing Certain Greeks to Jesus. The figure of the child was modelled on one of the Vicarage children, and various faces of the people in the pictures, and in the tympanum in the arch in the North Aisle showing The Last Supper, are strongly reminiscent of local characters and people known to the artist and the Vicar. There is no suggestion as to whom the St. Andrew

resembles, though it has sometimes been said that the kneeling figure looks as if he has three legs.

The painted curtain under the tympanum illustrates a legend that The Apostles' Creed was composed by the Twelve, each contributing a clause. The curtain shows them, each hearing his traditional symbol – in most cases, the instrument of his martyrdom.

They are:

- St. Peter with the Keys
- St. Andrew with his Cross
- St. James in Pilgrim's dress
- St. John holding a chalice
- St. Thomas with a spear
- St. James the Less with a fuller's club
- St. Philip holding a basket of loaves
- St. Bartholomew with a flayer's knife
- St. Matthew holding a battle axe
- St. Simon the Zealot with a saw
- St. Jude holding a boat
- St. Matthias grasping a sword.

The Lady Chapel altar is decorated in relief panel of St. Mary standing in a ship, the symbol of the Church; and there are other symbols on the Mother of Our Lord in the design. The crucifix suspended over the altar is part of a processional cross given to the Church by the family of Alfred Simpson in January 1958. It had once belonged to the church of St. Andrew, Bethnal Green, but had proved a less permanent church than our St. Andrew's.

Benefaction and Beautification

The chairs which had filled the nave and side aisles were replaced by pews in 1970. These came from St. Saviour's, Hammersmith, where after a reordering they were found to be surplus to requirement. Their effect in St. Andrew's was striking. The now open side aisles give the building a sense of spaciousness and a charm which its dull and undistinguished exterior hardly leads you to expect.

The Memorial Book in which the names of the parish dead, including many who were worshippers from the early days of St. Andrew's, and some generous benefactors over the years, was the gift and handiwork of Arthur Milton Roberts. A devoted Lay Reader and St. Andrew's man, he painted the Mothers' Union Banner and was responsible for innumerable other examples of lettering and artistry in the Church, as well as in the homes of many members of the congregation. These are his abiding memorials here.

Much of the present character of the Church is due to the work of Anne Shearn who made the applique Noah's Ark behind the font and the embroidered Angel of the Annunciation which hangs over the entrance to the Lady Chapel. She has been primarily responsible for the design, and for overseeing the work of making the beautiful and original kneelers which celebrate the first hundred years of The Permanent Church of St. Andrew's. each of them is based on a feature in the Church – the windows, the choir stall carvings, figures in the Noah's Ark, the enamelled roundels – so emphasising the unity and harmony of the building and its people.

When Florence Dobinson died in the summer of 1985, she left the magnificent sum of £5,000 to the Church, and it was decided to spend it on the improvement of the organ. Its range was extended with a new pedal board and extra stops, and this too emphasised the harmony of the Church and of the organist.

A Landscaped Link

Nor has the outside been forgotten. As long ago as 1954 there was an exchange of correspondence between the Vicar of St. Andrew's and the Orpington Urban District Council about the laying out of the land behind and around the Church as a Riverside Gardens. But nothing much happened that directly affected the Church until 1983 when the London Borough of Bromley proposed a scheme which extended the strip of land on the north side of the Church to take in 60 or more feet of the Allotments in order to form a Landscaped Footpath Link, designed by Miss Lesley Hipkin, which would be maintained by the local authority and become part of the Bromley Clean and Green policy. After negotiation about the provision of gates suitable for funeral corteges to pass through and hedges, and the design of the striking and (it is to be hoped) vandal-proof cross to be erected beside the Church, the work was entrusted to John Gurling of Reading, and begun in September 1985. The official opening of St. Andrew's Gardens by the Mayor took place on Tuesday January 21st, 1986. After a short service in the Church at which The Bishop of Tonbridge preached and 'Jerusalem' was sung, the congregation walked upon Bromley Clean and Green for speeches and prayers at the cross.

Although the acquisition of the extra land by the council caused a certain amount of dismay to some of the allotment holders (one was heard telling the landscape architect he would like to blow her up – and other things) the Gardens have become a valued and admired part of the local scene and a great enhancement of the Church's setting. Unfortunately, it has also become at times a rallying point for local youths who sometimes seem less than clean and green in their treatment of the trees and shrubs.

Comings and Goings

In common with most churches these days St. Andrew's has suffered from vandalism and theft. In December 1985, just after it had been repaired, enlarged and re-roofed, the Old Scout Hut was set on fire and destroyed. A new and bigger one – not beautiful but certainly useful – has been built, but that too suffers damage from time to time. At various times in the last thirty years the Church has been entered and an umbrella stand, candlesticks, altar linen, a Sanctuary lamp, bells and a prayer desk stolen, crosses and Churchwardens' staves smashed and windows broken. The most audacious intrusion took place in 1992 when at the end of March and the beginning of April three attempts were made to break into the Vestry and open the safe. At the third attempt the safe was stolen. It contained the Marriage, Baptism and Confirmation Registers, the Inventories and other parish documents as well as the Communion Plate. The Registers and documents were found, dumped beside a nearby footpath. The silver was not recovered. But it has been replaced, and the original inscriptions engraved on the underneath of each new piece so that the benefactions are not forgotten.'

Even more unfortunate was the theft in 1974 of the small safe, or aumbry, containing the Reserved Sacrament for the Sick, which at the time was bolted to a shelf behind the altar in the Side Chapel. As the policeman who came to investigate the incident said, standing in the Chapel with his helmet on, "It's b.....y sacrilege." Indeed, it was.

A new aumbry was subsequently cemented into the south wall of the Chapel, and although several attempts have been made to open it, none have succeeded.

And Staying Put

There are those who have worshipped at St. Andrew's – and those who still do – who feel great affection for the building and all that it has meant, just as there are not a few who, although they are not often at its services, yet feel grateful for its presence and its prayers. Such a superficial survey of a century in the life of our parish church must leave many folk unmentioned, many gifts and good deeds unrecorded, many memories unrevealed. This has mainly been about the building, and the decoration of it, and its furnishings. But the almost invariable and spontaneous remark of strangers coming in the for first time – "What a beautiful church" – is occasioned not by the visual impression, but by the feel of it, a feeling created by the fact that every day prayer is offered here in the Holy Communion and in the Daily Offices.

The building itself has changed over the century of its existence. It has been added to and subtracted from; according to the tastes of its admirers or critics it has been beautified, or it has been diminished. (After the completion of the 1967 redecoration one parishioner scornfully asked the Vicar if he was satisfied with 'his

picture gallery'.) It will change over the next hundred years. Yet its permanence consists in the offering of those prayers.

Whatever happens, it will still, we hope, stand in this geographical area called the Parish of St. Andrew, Orpington for which it has been made responsible by the Law of England and the Law of God, as a witness to our Christian heritage.

This has been compiled from the various Minute Books, Documents, Parish Magazines, Correspondence and plans which are kept in the church.

Vicars of St. Andrew's

1934	The Reverend Ernest George Reginald Hougham
1938	The Reverend William Trevor Rees
1950	The Reverend Roland Laucelot
1953	The Reverend Gerald Seymour Tyers
1960	The Reverend John Catling Allen
1966	The Reverend James Allen Groves

Assistant Curates of the Parish

1942	The Reverend F. Towler	until 1953
1943	The Reverend A. Murray	until 1945
1961	The Reverend P.J. Edwards	until 1967
1967	The Reverend W.A. Canham	until 1970
1978	The Reverend M.T. Skinner (Non-Stipendiary Ministry)	until 1982

Communion Plate

Stolen from the Church in April 1992 and replaced:

- A Silver Chalice engraved: "A.D.M.G. In loving memory of Ronald and Kenneth Williams Pilots. R.A.F. 1943, R.I.P."
- A Silver Patten engraved: "Ece Agnus Dei ecce qui Tollit Peccata Mundi"
- A Silver Chalice engraved: "A.D.M.G. and in memory of Constance Edith Tremain. R.I.P."
- A Silver Patten to match.
- A Silver Ciborium engraved: "To the Glory of God and in Memory Of Garden Llandoe Duff. Priest 1924-1938 R.I.P."

Not Stolen:

- A Silver Ciborium in the Aumbry engraved: "To the Glory of God and in memory of Samuel Edward Bayard Serle. Priest. R.I.P. September 1939"
- A Silver-Plated Ciborium Engraved "Dedicated 31.i.65 and given by David Sharp, Server, as a Thank-offering."
- A Silver-Plated Alms Dish: The Gift of the Reverend J. Fraser
- A Silver-Plated Wafer Box engraved "To the Glory of God. Presented by Charles Harris Altar Server and Officer at St. Andrew's. In Thanksgiving 1963
- A Double Pyx in Silver engraved "Peter Heyland June 29 – July 2, 1915 Crescat in Pace."

Amongst the many other Benefactors who have contributed to the life and Worship of St. Andrew's we would remember among the departed:

Alfred Colthrup
Maud Hillman
Mabel Lawrence
Doris Neal

Frederick Corbet Wynn Werninck
Mr. & Mrs. John Williams
Ivy Wise
Cyril Douglas Wood
Leonard Wykes

... and of those still worshipping in the Church Militant;

Victoria Mary Brier
Mr. & Mrs. Malcolm Hubbard

Centenary Kneelers

The Centenary Kneelers have been provided by, amongst others: