
the last 100 years 1905-2005

A History of All Saints



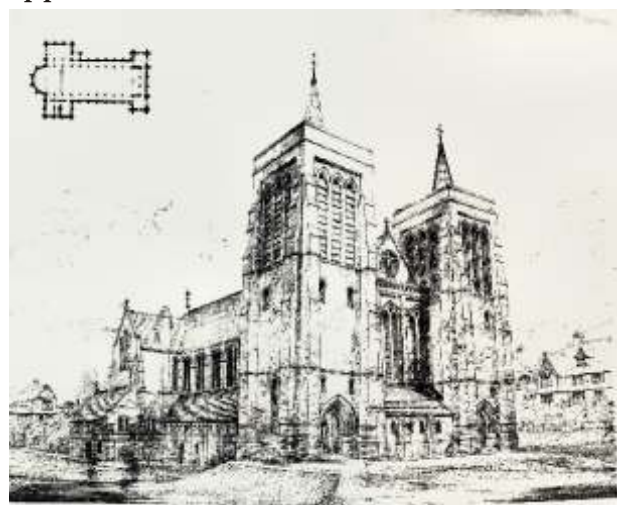
All Saints' Iron Room

The start of it all

In the late 19th century there was a housing expansion in the Kitsbury area. St Peter's Church was well attended so there was a need for a place of worship in this area of the town. To begin with services were held in a coach house or barn in Kitsbury Road behind the Berkhamsted Union Workhouse. The workhouse was later pulled down and a row of shops, Kitsbury Parade, replaced it. Then the All Saints' Iron Room was built in Cross Oak Road in the 1890's; it was made of corrugated iron, hence its name, but was better known as the Tin Tabernacle. If you look at the picture of the Tin Tabernacle you can see many articles of church furniture that are still used in All Saints' today. After All Saints' church was built the Tin Tabernacle became All Saints' Hall.

The Revd Arthur Johnson was the Rector of Berkhamsted at this time (1883-1902) and it was he who with Lord Brownlow sought sanction to build a "Chapel-of-ease to the church of St Peter"; his brother, the curate, the Revd Harry Johnson, did the missionary work in the Kitsbury area. Apparently in 1889, 200 people attended a meeting at the Progress Hall. There was obviously quite a congregation.

The Revd H. Constable-Curtis was the rector who saw All Saints' Church built. Mr. C. H. Rew was the architect. He also designed Dean's Hall, the Collegiate School Chapel and Stonycroft, 9 Shrublands Road. You can see Stonycroft in the architect's drawing. He worked on the project in collaboration with his son, Noel. There is considerable discussion regarding which Rew did what, but there doesn't appear to be a definitive answer.



Architect's Drawing



Mr F. Harrowell of Tring erected the main building. A fragment of a former Norman font, stated in Cobb's History of Berkhamsted as being preserved in St. Peter's, was transferred to All Saints' and built into the chancel wall; it is at the back of the church on the right of the small worship area, below the aumbry.

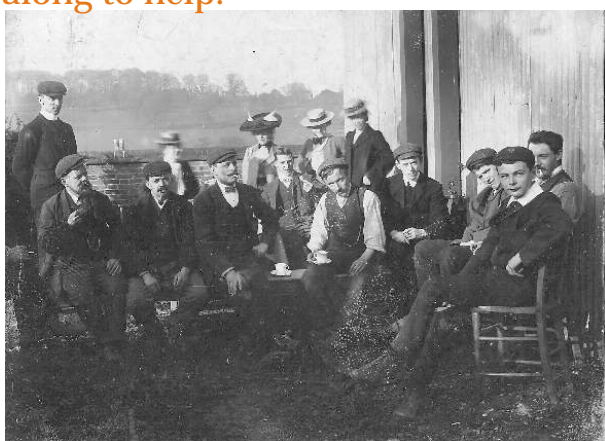


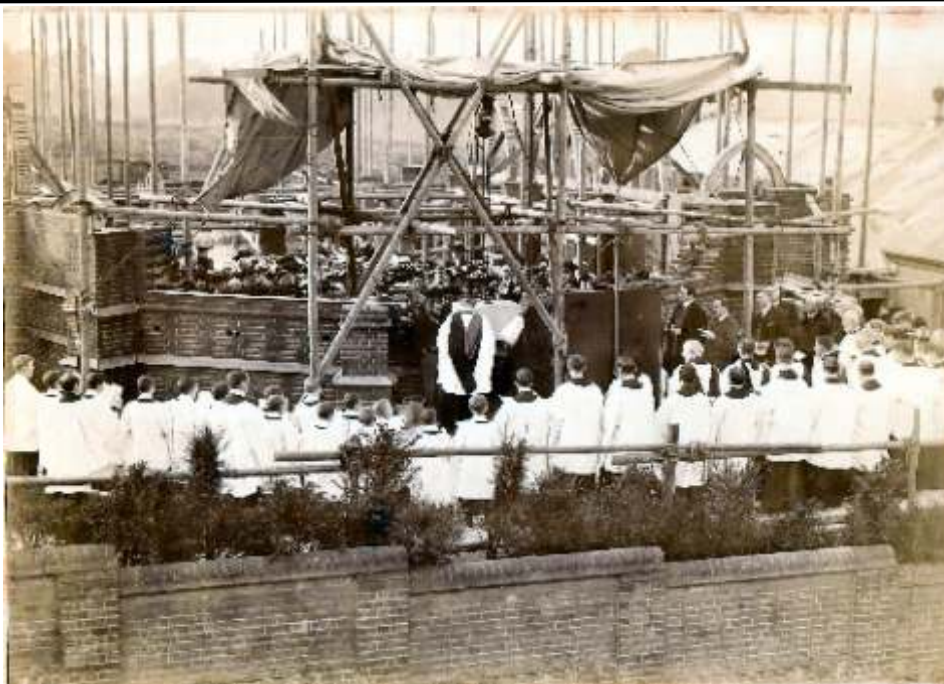
Voluntary helpers laid the foundations; there are many pictures of these men posing suitably. This one shows Dorothy Baily's grandfather: he's the one at the front with the pocket handkerchief; and also Frederick Charles Herbert Potter, identified as the grandfather of more Berkhamsted residents, Frances and Rosalyn Coldham. He is the gentleman with the flat cap and the watch chain. Both gentlemen can be seen in the picture below.

At the same time, a font that was given to St Peter's in 1662, was also moved to All Saints'. In this old photograph of the font, you can also see the bell pull rope. Until the church was turned round (see page 6) All Saints' had two bells that were rung to summon the faithful to services. Unfortunately they were lost at that time.



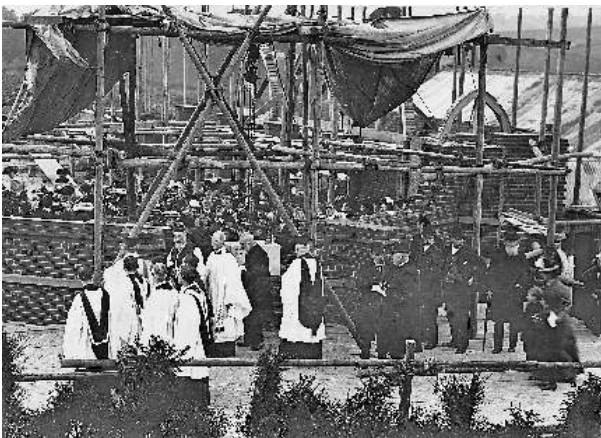
I like this picture below, because it looks as if the ladies have come along to help.





The foundation stone is laid

The Bishop of Colchester, Rt Rev Henry Frank, laid the foundation stone on October 5th 1905. Colchester was then part of the St Albans Diocese, and only moved to Chelmsford Diocese in 1914. Our Church was dedicated by Bishop Jacob of St. Albans on the eve of Whit Sunday 1906. The reason the building was not then consecrated but only licensed for services was that it was not completed: the original plans included twin towers at the western end as you can see in the architect's drawing, on page 1 but the proposal was later abandoned.



Round about 1915 a pipe organ was given to the church. It had come originally from All Saints' Church, Tufnell Park, then had gone to a private house in Chesham Road. On the death of the owner the widow presented the organ to All Saints'. It was a three manual pedal organ with 32 stops built by Kirkland of London.





The lady second from the left in the back row is Pat Hearne's grandmother. The child at the right hand end is May Kempster and the child sitting on the grass second from the right is Dorothy Baily.

All Saints' is closed

The picture of the cradle roll in 1919 indicates a thriving congregation, so that the closure of All Saints' in 1923 came as a considerable blow to the community. As far as can be found out, the reason was that the cost of the upkeep of All Saints' was a lot more than the revenue it raised. St Peter's found itself quite over extended; efforts to raise by donation the cost of the curate's salary, £280, had not met their target. Repairs were needed both for St Peter's and All Saints' so it was with considerable reluctance that they made the decision to shut the building in May 1923. This caused a great deal of consternation and hurt, as can be imagined, but services continued in the Tin Tabernacle, All Saints' Hall, and there was a high attendance at the 3 services on a Sunday: 80-140 for the 11am service. This continued for 15 years until 1938 when St Peter's found itself in a more robust financial position. The building was reopened and the roof, gate and electrics were repaired. I have been informed that this is a very unusual thing to happen: when churches are closed, they usually remain closed, and it would have taken considerable determination to reopen All Saints'.

The war and after

During the war there was an 8am weekly communion. After the war the Revd E K Mules was appointed as our curate, the first since the Revd L.G. Meade left in 1922. The Revd Mules was also the chaplain at the Boys' School. During the following years there were more roof repairs and a home for the curate was purchased at 56 Greenway. This was later sold and a new house built next to the church in 1963. Apparently when they came to build, they had to get permission from Lord Brownlow's descendants as permission to build on his land was only for a church.

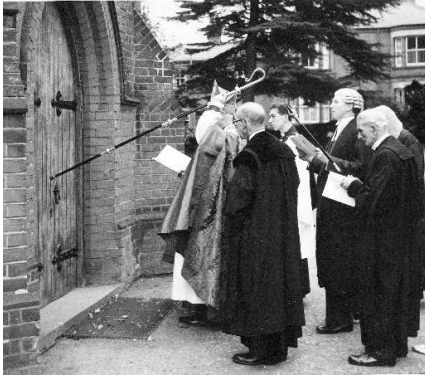
In 1950 the pipe organ was removed and replaced by a Compton electronic organ. The pipe organ had been neglected and badly repaired; workmen had been allowed access without the supervision of an organ builder. (In 1985 the Compton was replaced by a Makin electronic organ as spare parts were no longer available).



All Saints' without All Saints House

All Saints Consecration

In 1956, 50 years after its dedication, during the time of the Revd Wilf Wilkinson, All Saints' was consecrated. As the Berkhamsted Gazette said at the time, "Thus there has been legal completion in the church's Jubilee Year, and this has permitted that wonderful service of consecration, the solemnity and impressive ritual of which will long remain in the minds of the congregation." Wilf Wilkinson had an extraordinary ministry: he built All Saints' into a thriving community. One of his successors said about him, "He made a really outstanding contribution by his energetic and visionary ministry, which set a 'bench mark' for his successors".



The Bishop requesting entrance



These were the clergy and servers. A very young Michael Meacher is in the back row of the servers nearest to the church. Also can be seen Bernard Hughes the Rector at Northchurch St Mary and Robert Brown the Rector of Berkhamsted St Peters.

The All Saints' congregation grew to a large size because of Wilf and his successors. At special services there was no guarantee of a seat, and people who were late were crammed at the back. Parish breakfast was never coffee and biscuits in those days, but a sit down meal: egg, bacon, toast and marmalade, and tea or coffee. However in the late 60's the congregation began to drop off for various reasons.



The choir in 1963. Our curate John Gilbert is in the front row with Keith Biggin the choirmaster and organist. Pat Hearne is just visible next to the cross and so is George Allen in the back row standing tall.

The first stages of our ecumenical project

By 1970 Revd Kenneth Hinds was in talks with Revd David Reep, the Methodist minister. Both Churches were faced with serious building problems. The Methodists found themselves needing larger and more modern premises than the chapel on the High Street; and All Saints' hall was going to have to be closed because of its need for extensive repairs and refurbishment, thus leaving the Church with no facilities for Youth Clubs, Sunday Schools, Guides, Brownies and other activities.



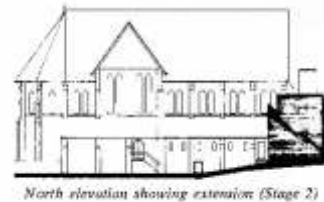
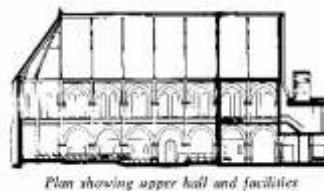
The Methodist Chapel in the High street; it is now Domino's Pizza.



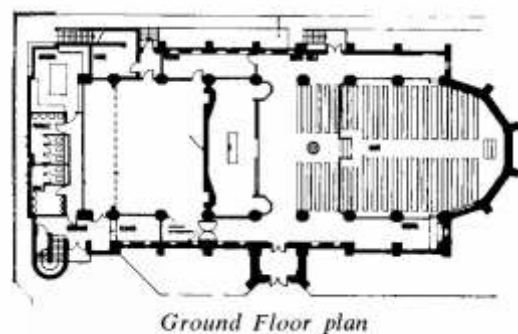
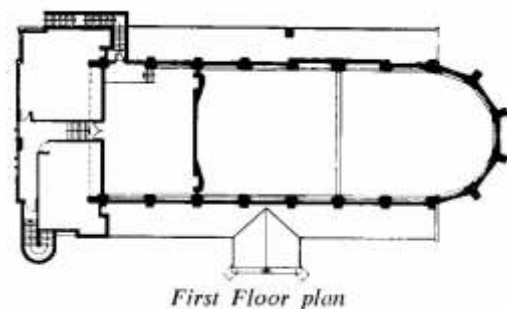
The Methodist Chapel inside

A good working relationship between the two clergy resulted in discussions and in due course an offer was made to the Methodists, that All Saints' should be a shared building, which could be enlarged and modernised. This offer was accepted.

The architect, Percy Mark, submitted six different schemes and finally it was agreed to divide the church as it now is. The alterations to the front half, the worship area, involved moving the altar from the East end to the West end . . . a cause of much heart-searching, theological debate and steam!!



These two photographs of the All Saints' inside were taken the day before the builders came in to turn it round in 1974.



Down to the nitty gritty

The final cost of the whole scheme was around £100,000 and this was funded by the sale of the Methodist Chapel (approximately £47,000), the land occupied by All Saints' Hall (£10,000) and numerous gifts, donations and fund-raising activities (£43,000). The whole project had been completed by 1980 when a legal Sharing Agreement was duly signed and the freehold ownership was conveyed from the Rector of St Peter's to a new company, The Anglican Methodist Association (Berkhamsted) Ltd. This body, which has twelve members, six from each denomination, legally owns the land, building and joint funds; but the day-to-day smooth running of the church is delegated to the Joint Council.

Kenneth Hinds left at the start of the project and David Reep left after 4 years so it was given to the Revd John Payne Cook and the Revd Maurice Jelbert to see it through to completion, which they did with great skill, but not without cost to the members of the congregation. Choices had to be made. All Saints' could not accommodate all the Methodist Chapel furniture, and, as much of it was made by members of the congregation or their parents, it was often quite painful. The Methodist pews did not fit; the Anglicans lost their pulpit, but gained the Methodist one.



The old Anglican Pulpit



While Shepherds Watched - a Roger Jones musical

During the 1980's our congregations had to learn to share a building; often it was hard with many misunderstandings over styles of worship, different expectations of leadership, and different ways of doing things. Things that helped us grow together were events that were not in the usual run of our life, like musicals.



The pictures above and below are of *The Witness* a musical by Jimmy and Carol Owens



The next stage

They were great fun, and with the friendships that were occurring between us all, the stage was set for the next step. In the early 1990's it was decided that the two congregations should move from a level of mutual co-operation to a new depth of commitment and a Declaration of Intent and a Constitution were drafted. The Local Ecumenical Partnership deed was signed on 24 January 1993 when the two congregations made a commitment to each other.

And in 2005

These matters move slowly!! Twelve years later in 2005, our centenary, following questionnaires, discussions, an external review, meetings galore and much praying, we are now acting, in most matters, as one body. The most important factor is that the main Sunday Service of worship is a joint one for both congregations each week and that there is a joint Sunday School now called Explorers. The youth work had been run cooperatively since 1997.

There are also alterations to our building going on. The original Lady Chapel, which was immediately on your right as you came in the door, was moved a while ago to the north aisle, and replaced with a children's play area. With the disability access rules coming into force the south aisle has now been replaced with a ramp for wheelchair users.



The Lady Chapel is now a small worship area at the back of the church.



The organ has been moved to one side, and where the Lady Chapel was, is now a children's play area.

On the stairs to the upper hall a wonderful series of murals of Noah's Ark has been painted by Karen Pangbourne, and in the lower hall the photocopier room has been changed into a toilet for the disabled.



The people that built All Saints' had a great vision. Because of this, we today can make our church meet the needs of the people of the 21st century in witness, worship and community.





In writing this I must thank all the people that looked things up for me, and are still doing so, the people that have told me bits of their history of the church, those that have written things out for me, and those that have rung me back with further information.

Gordon Hufford, Dorothy Baily, Mary Griffin, Kath Allen, Pat Hearne, Ruth Treves Brown, Keith Treves Brown, Julie Wakely, Mike Limbrick, Douglas Billington, Sheila Peaves, Felicity White, Pat Hunt, Vi Tibbles, Rob Halls, Revd Michael Bowie, Revd Mark Bonney, Revd John Gilbert, The Dacorum Heritage Trust and the Diocesan Archives.

Christina Billington - October 2005

Anglican Priests at All Saints'

1905 - 1908 Revd H Cobbing
 1909 - 1912 Revd A G Evans
 1915 - 1916 Revd G W Russell
 1917 - 1918 Revd G L Bent
 1919 - 1922 Revd L G Meade
 1923 - 1939 All Saints' was closed by the Rector of Berkhamsted, the Revd Chipchase Stainsby.

1939 - 1944 8am weekly communion
 1945 - 1948 Revd E K Mules. He was also the chaplain at the Boys' School.
 1949 - 1951 Revd Martin Young
 1953 - 1957 Revd Wilf Wilkinson
 1958 - 1959 Revd George Ward
 1960 - 1964 Revd John Gilbert
 1961 - 1967 Revd Peter Hill. He was a curate at St Peter's first.
 1968 - 1970 Revd Kenneth Hinds
 1971 - 1976 Revd John Payne Cook
 1978 - 1982 Revd John Metivier
 1983 - 1985 Revd Geoffrey Tristram
 1985 - 1989 Revd Richard Pyke
 1990 - 1995 Revd Matthew Baynes
 1997 - 2001 Revd Robin Figg
 2002 - 2005 Revd Martin Wright

Methodist Ministers at All Saints' since the Sharing Agreement

1967 - 1974 Revd David Reep was minister when negotiations started with Revd Kenneth Hinds.
 1974 - 1979 Revd Maurice Jelbert
 1979 - 1992 Revd Alan Cox
 1992 - 1994 Revd Dr Robert Bean
 1994 - 1995 Revd Harold Mason
 1995 - 1997 Revd Nicholas Paterson
 1997 - 2001 Revd Martin Turner
 2001 - Revd Paul Timmis