

The History of St Michael's Barn Church, Farley Green



St Michael's Church in Farley Green is one of four churches in the Parish of Albury – a unique 19th century barn built between 1840 and 1880. In 1929 the owner's widow, Clara Courtenay-Wells gave the barn to the community to be converted into a church as a memorial to her husband, the local farmer of Cherrymans Farm. It was dedicated as a Chapel of Ease in the Parish of Albury in 1930. Whilst the Church of St Peter and St Paul in the heart of Albury itself is the main centre for regular worship, the Barn Church is only open for childrens' Messy Church and Little Fishes services and for celebrating the major festivals, such as Easter and Christmas and on occasions such as a Baptism, Service of Remembrance or a Dedication.

The conversion work was carried out by FW Woods and Sons, builders of Little London. The construction is a brick and ironstone dwarf wall, surmounted by oak framing with weatherboarding outside and lath and plaster within. The roof is strutted framework boarded on rafters and tiled. The work was done under the supervision of Mr Charles Allen of Yew Tree Cottage, Shophouse Lane. The oak furniture and fittings in the chancel were made by Mr Charles Allen and given by local people. Furniture in the sanctuary was given in memory of Lucy Allen (1870-1952), a devout and constant worshipper at the church. On the south wall of the chancel is a tablet "In memory of Clara Courtenay-Wells (1873-1948) who gave so much loving care to St Michael's Church and unselfish service to Farley Green and the neighbourhood". There is a stone font, and an organ, rebuilt by Kingsgate Davison & Co of London in 1949.

During the 1939-45 war, when church bells were only to be rung in the event of an invasion, the single bell at St Michael's was heard tolling. Upon investigation, it was found that a cow had broken out of the adjoining field and caught her horn on the bell rope! Also during that period the church was occasionally used for A.R.P. instruction. The bell was replaced in the eighties by Peter Jeorett, a nearby resident, after the original was stolen.

A local artist, Ernest Board, who lived at Thatch Cottage, Shophouse Lane, painted the panel on the altar screen (reredos) and designed the stained glass window depicting St Christopher which is set in the north wall. A further painting by the artist hanging on the West wall was rescued from storage in Albury Parish Church in 2008 and restored through funds raised by the Charity responsible for the preservation of the Barn Church.

The St Michael's Church Fabric Fund Trust was formed in the mid 1980's to support the Parochial Church Council with maintenance costs through annual appeals and fund-raising activities. In 2014 planning permission was granted and Diocesan approval received in 2015 for the Charity's project to provide a cloakroom and kitchenette in order to extend the building's use within the community. After putting out the work for tender, a local builder, Mr Paul Gilham, commenced work in 2016. The extension to the lobby, accessible to wheelchair users, provides a more spacious entrance hall, toilet facilities and a kitchenette with storeroom. In 2017 the Trust restructured as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and is now known as The Friends of St Michael's Barn Church.

In 2019 The Friends, in partnership with the Parochial Church Council, have been able to complete the re-cladding of the entire building as a result of generous donations from local supporters and an active fund-raising team. Two items of furniture have been recently restored by Chris Parker – a late-Victorian mahogany-veneered cabinet which serves as a prayer book and bible store, and a small oak bench, both of which are situated in the hallway. The new garden – Mary's Garden – has been redesigned courtesy of the Wilkie family and the plantings are now well-established. More recently a water supply pipe has been installed and awaiting connection by Thames Water. The Charity has launched an appeal to re-tile the roof and associated work and submitted a Grant application to Your Fund Surrey which is now under consideration.

New directions for the Barn Church



Tucked away down a track close to Farley Green is one of the parish's hidden treasures - the Barn Church of St Michael's. It is a 19th century barn built between 1840 and 1880, gifted to the parish of Albury to be converted into a church, and dedicated as a Chapel of Ease in 1930. This saved local farmers the long walk to Albury, or Shere, for Sunday services.

But with cars and increased mobility, fewer people came to services there and in the 1980s it looked as if strained church finances meant St Michael's might have to close. Determined not to lose their church - and Farley Green's only public building - local people formed a charitable trust to help maintain it. Fund raising events and generous contributions from residents, local organisations and visitors have over the years helped to keep the building standing, waterproof and much more user friendly.

What's changed?

On the ground, you'll see definite changes. Some pews have been replaced by folding wooden chairs to make better use of the space and with great ingenuity a composting toilet and kitchenette have been built in an extension to the entrance hall. The imminent project this autumn is the replacement of rotten cladding boards on the south side of the building, followed by a re-design of the entrance garden.

On the legal side, the old Fabric Fund Trust has been replaced by a new charity, the Friends of St Michael's Barn Church. It's a newish form of charity known as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), with stated objects, required structure and limitations on what it can do. Being a CIO not only gives charitable status but also liability protection to the charity trustees who oversee the Friends' finances and activities. For simplicity in view of new data etc regulations, it hasn't been set up as a membership organisation, but a structure for supporters is being worked out.

What now?

The major festivals are celebrated throughout the year as well as special services and baptisms. Regular Messy Church services and picnics on the green continue to be a great hit, especially with children newly arrived in the neighbourhood. In addition to helping the Albury Parochial Church Council (APCC) maintain and improve the fabric of St Michael's, the purpose of the Friends is to promote community activities. So it's planned to keep up the established social evenings (including Bubbles in the Barn in the New Year and exhibitions of local art and craft in early summer), not to mention the much enjoyed Christmas workshops

The trustees and APCC are open to making the Barn Church available to other groups/families for suitable events, bearing in mind St Michael's is a place of worship and a consecrated building. And to extending its use to other events which will bring us together. Ideas always welcome - and the energy to carry them out!

It's lovely that Mary Wilkie's family want to celebrate her long life as a resident of Farley Heath for 65 years and fulfil her wish of mounting an exhibition of paintings in the Church that was very close to her heart. (Please see back page)

Getting involved?

In accordance with the Friends' Constitution, there are three foundation trustees plus representatives of APCC. More may be appointed, but it's envisaged that most activities will be carried out by ad hoc working groups, on the principle that a lot of people doing a small amount of work each is better than a few people doing it all! And of course there's always room for people able to spare an hour or two at events. Please do contact one of us if you'd like to know more - no commitment.

Plus Friends will need the continuing generous financial support of the local community and others who value St Michael's and what it stands for. More on this in the New Year.

Why not visit the 'new look' St Michael's during the open weekends this month? And when you're there, check out the story of the cow who warned of an invasion....

Sue Darling 01483 203420

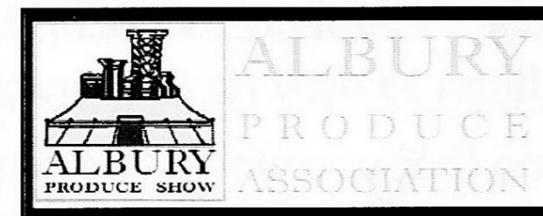
sdarling521@hotmail.com

Liz Cooper 01483 203129

mcooper@fastmail.fm

Sally Godfrey 07772 684723

sales@kaboodlebag.co.uk



After many years of excellent volunteer service, Sue Cook has decided that she would like to step down from her role as Treasurer for the Albury Produce Association. Sue will continue on the committee and will be available to pass on her knowledge and assistance to the new Treasurer.

As you know the Produce Show is a much loved annual event for the village and has been running without interruption since the 1860's.

The committee would like to invite a volunteer to take on the role of Treasurer from Sue. There are no specific qualification requirements although the ability to manage spreadsheets and be a good administrator would be very helpful. It is not a hugely time

consuming volunteer role but most of all we are looking for an enthusiastic team member to join the committee.

If you are interested in the role please email Julian Harley (Chairman) on julian.harley@btclick.com or call him

on 07774 636855