

## 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.