

King Charles the Martyr Church, South Mymms

A Short History

Part 1 by the Reverend David Hencken (written in the 1970s)

with additional material by John Rowley 2001

Many people have asked why the Church in this parish should bear such an unusual Dedication since there are only six other Churches in this country which have this title and one of those is a ruin and stands as a War Memorial on the outskirts of Plymouth. I suppose that it all stems from the mind of the Reverend Allen Hay, Vicar of the Mother Church of St. Giles, South Mymms, who was Vicar from 1898 to 1954.

Potters Bar was expanding rapidly in the 1930's and another Church was urgently required in the new Estates being built in his parish. He therefore enlisted the help of the Reverend Trevor Basil Woodd, a fellow member of the Royal Martyr Church Union, and it was proposed at the A.G.M. of that organisation that it would further the cause of the R.M.C.U., which had been founded in 1906 for the purpose of honouring the name of Charles I, and to restore it to its proper place in the Anglican Calendar, if a new Church was built and dedicated in his name. The resolution was passed and a Fund started to raise the necessary money.

There are six other churches dedicated to King Charles the Martyr:

1. In 1641 Charles I agreed to the division of the parish of Plymouth and ordered that the new church should be called Charles' Church. This was the outcome of quarrels between the Vicar, appointed by the Puritan Corporation and the Lecturer, appointed by the King. Bishop Seth-Ward of Exeter consecrated the new church in 1663. In 1941 Charles Church was destroyed by enemy action and in 1964 the parishes of Charles with St. Luke and of St. Matthias were united. When Charles' Church was destroyed, the vestry remained intact so all the old registers and documents were preserved.
2. Charles II when driven out of England at the end of the Civil war left Falmouth. On his Restoration, he ordered a church to be built in memory of his father, and in 1665 Bishop Seth-Ward of Exeter consecrated King Charles the Martyr Church.
3. Newtown-in-Wem Shropshire. The Church of Charles King and Martyr was consecrated in 1656.
4. Peak Forest, Derbyshire. In 1657 the Royalist Duchess of Devonshire built King Charles Church for the use of the Royal Foresters and in defiance of Parliament. The Church was restored in 1964.
5. Tunbridge Wells. In 1678 a chapel dedicated to Charles, King and Martyr was built when Tunbridge Wells had become a fashionable "watering place" where Charles II's men drank the healing waters of the wells. Among the subscribers were John Evelyn, the diarist and Samuel Pepys, who subscribed £1.1s.6d
6. Shelland, near Stowmarket, Suffolk. In 1760 the Church of King Charles the Martyr was rebuilt. No one knows why the church existed unless it had been built by a Royalist family who lived at some long-vanished manor house nearby. In the church is the only "chyme barrel organ" still in use today. This is operated by a handle and there

are three drums each playing twelve hymn tunes. This remote little church is well worth a visit.

Interestingly, in the U.S.A. and Canada there are some 120 parishes bearing King Charles' name. At first sight this may sound strange in a Republic but, of course, Charles I was accepted as the King, the war of Independence not coming for some years later.

Before going into more detail about K.C.M. in Potters Bar, we ought to answer the original question about Charles being a martyr. Of course, he was not a martyr in the same sense as St. Stephen or St. Alban, for he did not give his life for his Christian Faith. Yet he did give his life for his beliefs. A Martyr is not necessarily a Saint. He is simply one who, of his own free choice, lays down his life for a cause that he considers worthy. Charles understood that his Coronation, or more properly, his Anointing in that Service, had bestowed upon him an Authority and a Responsibility to care for the people of England.

For such a task he had received the Grace of the Holy Spirit. It is akin to the Grace of Holy Orders received by Priests and Bishops at their Ordination or Consecration. It was no arrogance that led him to claim the Divine right of the King. He had been called to the Office of a King and had accepted the responsibility of that requirement in both Church and Nation.

Up to the last, he could have saved his life by agreeing to the abolition of the Episcopate in the Church. The Church of England would have lost its status as the Catholic Church of the nation and become Presbyterian or Independent.

To return to King Charles the Martyr, South Mymms. On Saturday 25th November 1939 at 3pm the Foundation Stone was blessed by the Bishop of Willesden and laid by The Reverend T. Basil Woodd, who is descended from Captain Basil Woodd, Gentleman-at-Arms to King Charles, and who was with him on the scaffold and who received his Garter Star (which is still a treasured possession of the Woodd family), just before his beheading. Incidentally, the High Altar Crucifix bears an emblem of the Garter, and there are several others in various parts of the Church.

Viscount Cranborne generously gave the Site. The R.M.C.U. provided £5,300 and the Bishop of London's Forty-five Churches Fund met the rest of the cost of the building, £3,700. (Total cost £9,000)

The Church was designed by Messrs. Eden and Marchant and built in the style of a Jacobean Barn, with a roof coming down to within a few feet of the ground and making the windows like Dormer Windows. It is spacious, light and has a dignity that evokes an atmosphere of worship and reverence.

The Consecration of the Church was to have been held in 1940, but the War and problems with the shortage of materials delayed this (though the Dedication did take place on November 3rd 1940) and it was not until 12th July 1941 that the Consecration by the Bishop of London took place. The Service paper has a note to the effect that "should an Air Raid Warning sound during the Service, there will be a short interval

during which those who wish to go home or to the public shelter should reverently leave the Church. The Service will then proceed”.

Before the building of the Church, Fr. Etherington, the first Missioner took up his appointment in December 1937 and held Services in the Dining Room of his house at 80 Borough Way. Nine people attended the Christmas Eucharist that year. Then the worshippers met in his garage and later in the Hall-cum-Church built near the corner of Dugdale Hill Lane and Mutton Lane.

The hall was a substantial wooden building with a fully equipped stage and was located next to the Brethren Hall in Dugdale Hill Lane. The building, costing £1066.19.5 was opened on the 12th of June 1938. Between the hall and the church was a field on which church fêtes and other outdoor events were held. Attached to the church hall was a large brick air raid shelter that was later used at one end by the Scout Group as a storeroom and by a church group called “The King’s Messengers” at the other. Organisations such as the Mothers’ Union, Scouts, Guides, Badminton Club and the Youth Club all used the main hall regularly over many years for their meetings. The hall was demolished and the next church hall built around 1961 – with the present modern day replacement being built in 2003.

The present church building came into use in November 1940 but was not completed until 1969 when the beautiful Baptistry in the form of an Apse was built. At the time, the Church was cleaned and re-decorated and gas heating replaced the obsolete boiler.

Gifts for the Church came from many people, particularly the R.M.C.U.

- The High Altar Cross is unique, since it bears the date of the Martyrdom (1649) as well as the Garter symbol. Mrs. Hamilton gave that, and the Candlesticks in memory of her husband.
- The Lady Chapel Sanctuary Lamp was the gift of Fr. Hay and the Church of St. Giles.
- The St. John Chapel Lamp was given by Elizabeth Larcombe and her daughter in memory of Walter Fisher Larcombe.
- The stone Altar came from the Nursing Sisters of St. John the Divine, then in Hastings, when their old Chapel was demolished.
- There is a silver Chalice set with amethysts together with a Paten, in memory of Sarah Hawkins, which was given by Mr. and Mrs. Holden.
- A very fine Chalice and Paten, inscribed “in memory of a Sister” in which a diamond ring is set in the stem of the Chalice, is quite unusual. The matching Ciborium was the gift of the Revd. F. G. Etherington, the first Missioner here.
- The bell was given by the Reverend Basil Woodd and came from St. Saviour’s, Maple Street, London. He also discovered the Jacobean Pulpit, which was being used as the panelling around the fireplace of a Victorian Farmhouse. He bought it and had it restored to its proper use.

- The Church also possesses a Silver-Gilt Chalice that was on loan to the Victoria & Albert Museum and in the treasury display in St Albans Cathedral, but which is now used by us regularly. It is unique and therefore priceless. It has embossed figures of the Saints on the bowl of the Chalice and marvellous engravings on the foot. The V&A tell us that it was made in Paris about 1860 by F. Pousseligne Rusand, but no-one knows the donor.

Miss Nora Hipgrave remembers its arrival. ‘It was during the incumbency of Revd. Joscelyn Fellowes-Brown (1947-53). One weekday, Mrs Violet Sheen and I attended the early morning Eucharist. After the service the vicar came back into the church carrying the chalice, and said “Look at this: it came by post yesterday,” He said it was poorly wrapped in brown paper and was addressed to King Charles the Martyr Church London. It came from America and inside was a slip of paper with the words: - “This will probably be of more use to you than it is to me.” That was all – no name or address and no explanation.’

- The Font is much older than the Church. It bears the inscription “The offering of Ellen Clifford, Beatrice Elizabeth Henrietta and Rose Alice Schneider, 1874”.
- The Banner of King Charles was made by the Royal Schools of Needlework for an exhibition and when the late Queen Mary saw it, she said that it ought to be in one of the King Charles Churches and so it came to us. It is unique, as is also the Statue of Charles by the St. John Chapel.
- The Tapestry picture on the South wall of Charles taking farewell of his children was probably given by Colonel Stuart Houston.
- A fine display case (given by Mr. D. J. Beale in memory of his wife Irene) houses some of the books bequeathed to the church by the Reverend Basil Trevor Woodd, and from Major Stuart Houston who was secretary to the Royal Martyr Church Union.

The books include “Eikon Basilike”, King Charles’ own book of prayers and meditations; the “Book of Common Prayer” of 1669, “Memories of the Last Years of King Charles” by Sir Thomas Herbert, Major Huntington, Colonel Edward Coke and Mr. Henry Firebrace. These gentlemen were in attendance on King Charles and were his close friends. The accounts make very interesting reading and all emphasise his courtly manners and his dignity and calm in distressing circumstances.

Other books include “The Works of that Great Monarch and Glorious Martyr, King Charles”, published in 1776. “Memorials of English Affairs”, 1682. Three volumes of John Fox’s “Acts and Monuments of Martyrs” written in 1641 and listing all martyrs from the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus to those killed during the reign of Mary I. These books contain vivid and horrifying illustrations of various forms of torture inflicted on martyrs.

- Another case was made by Mr. Appleton. This contains the Chantry Book wherein are the names of those who have worshipped in the church or been closely connected with the parish. These are remembered each week on the

anniversary of their deaths. The Chantry Book was lettered and decorated by Miss Barker. (3)

- A “modern” Chalice with a tubular stem and conical cup was made by David Jarman (Scoutmaster) who was killed in a road accident in France on the way to a scout camp in 1972. (3)
- The organ came from the bombed Church of St. Faiths, Stepney and was rebuilt in 1985.
- The stained glass panel depicting Christ In Glory in the east window was given in 1956 by Captain Allan Clarke.

Gifts and improvements to the church continue to the present date including

- Four clergy prayer desks given in memory of Kathleen Abson, Mary Clout, Reginald Russell and Antony Notley
- The Altar rail given in memory of Francis Lewis
- A Paschal Candle Holder and matching flower stand given by Mrs Rose Aitchison
- New Choir Stalls given by Miss Kathleen Barker
- New Nave and Aisle seating given by Miss Nora Hipgrave.
- A portable font made by Philip Emmans
- The Lady Chapel Altar frontal to replace a rather old faded one paid for out of a bequest given by Miss Barker. It represents God the Father Son and Holy Spirit on a blue background representing Mary. Juliet Hemingray designed it.
- A Votive Candle Stand given by Sue Loader in memory of John Loader
- A new heating system installed in the summer of 2006
- The installation of two pictures, near the North Porch Door, which had been previously in the Church attic. They are of great interest to devotees of the Martyr King, since one portrays him and his family and another on his way to his execution. Henry Callcut skilfully restored the frames in 2006.
- The Banners were refurbished in 2008, thanks to a legacy from Rose Aitchison.
- Two moveable lecterns were given in memory of Harry and Joyce Hearn.

Part 2 – The 1980’s and 1990’s – by the Reverend Gareth Randall

The church of King Charles was initially part of the diocese of London. In the reorganisation of local boundaries in 1965, Potters Bar became part of Hertfordshire. In June 1980, after some deliberation, the church became part of the diocese of St. Albans - a more logical arrangement.

The position of the altar reflects some of the theological controversy of the past. Initially, it was against the East wall and, being an Anglo- Catholic foundation, mass was celebrated with the priest’s back to the congregation. After Vatican 2, the pressure was on to bring the altar forward and to celebrate facing the congregation. This was done in Father Grainger’s time with the encouragement of Revd Paul Oestricher who,

working at the time for the B.B.C, used to assist with services. When the next priest was appointed (Father Hencken in 1968) the altar was firmly replaced to its former position before he was inducted. With the appointment of Revd Ray Williams, the first evangelical vicar of the parish, the altar was once again brought forward.

The middle class housing of the 1930s has been added to by the building of a 1950s council estate. In the 1980's, to reach the present unchurched inhabitants of the parish, it was decided that a bridge needed to be established between them and the normal Rite A Eucharist (ASB), which was the main Sunday service. This was initially tackled in two ways. Firstly, on the first Sunday of each month, a simplified Rite A was introduced called the Open Door Service since its aim was to open the door to Christianity for people who were not used to Anglican Liturgy. The other way was to have an evening service with the emphasis on informality: songs accompanied by guitars, drums and keyboard, a time for open prayer, words of knowledge, and a prayer and healing ministry led by a pastoral team.

In January 1989, a weekly service of an informal nature called Morning Worship was established in the Small Church Hall. It was to start at 10.30a.m. and was geared to finish at 11.15a.m., approximately the same time as the Eucharist which started at 10.00a.m. Both congregations then had the opportunity to meet over a cup of tea or coffee in the Large Hall. This proved to be a major growth area and the numbers attending soon outgrew the Small Hall. Eventually, it was thought a good idea to move the service into the church itself (January 1990). This involved bringing the regular Eucharist forward to 9.15a.m. and the Morning Service back to 11.00a.m. Tea and Coffee was provided but at 10.30a.m. between services. To help link the congregations, the Open Door Service took place once a month on the First Sunday at 10.00a.m. instead of the other two. This practice stopped in the 1990's, and our present worship pattern continued, complemented by regular weekday worship.

Besides actual services in the church, a number of fellowship groups were been established to meet during the week on a fortnightly basis for bible study, prayer and fellowship. These groups provided a way of nurturing people's growth as Christians and to provide practical help and support.

Part 3 – Into the 21st Century – by Canon Michael Burns

The Opening and Dedication of the new Hall in 2003 represented the culmination of many years of aspiration and work. There was the initial resolve of the Church Council to explore the idea of upgrading and modernising the old Hall, which had served the Church and Community well over 40 years, but was failing to serve the needs of the 21st century. There was then the plan of the Diocese of St Albans to site a new Vicarage on part of our land, thus enabling monies to be released towards the building of a new Hall, which had become a much more viable option. There were then the hours spent developing the brief and design with the Architect and Local Planning Department. There was the task of raising the money, assisted by some generous legacies and grants and many generous individual donations as well as the round of

constant, albeit enjoyable, fundraising events, which began in September 2000, a month after the full plans had received unanimous planning permission. All this led the Church Council, in August 2002, to appoint Norris of Hertford Ltd as main contractor, together with Peter Miles, our Quantity Surveyor and Roger Wiltshire, our Structural Engineer, who have worked so closely with John McCall, our Architect and Construction Supervisor.

The project cost some £530,000, the money coming from a variety of sources – and it was immensely gratifying that the successful fund-raising resulted in a small surplus for future capital maintenance work.

INCOME:

Donations and Grants	£132,000
Legacies	£100,600
Sale of Land to the Diocese for the new Vicarage	£185,000
10% from net sale of old Vicarage	£ 32,000
Local Fundraising Events	£ 43,000
Interest/Gift Aid/Sundry Income	£ 36,000

Work commenced on demolishing the old Hall in August 2002 with building work on the new hall starting as soon as the site was cleared. A very wet period in the winter resulted in the building site being a mud lake for several weeks! In spite of this the hall was ready for occupation by September 2003 enabling the groups that had used the old hall to move back from temporary accommodation for the start of the autumn term. The new hall, linked to the Church, was opened by Lord Salisbury on 4 October 2003 and dedicated by the Bishop of Hertford. It was significant that Lord Salisbury performed the opening ceremony, cementing his family's long connection with the Church since the early 1930's when they gifted the land on which the Church was built.

The old Vicarage has been mentioned. This was a large ex farmhouse house in substantial grounds in Dugdale Hill Lane, unsuited to the diocesan requirements for vicarages in the 21st century. In 2000, a house in Pinewood Drive was purchased by the diocese, for use as a temporary vicarage until the building of the new vicarage on the church site was completed in September 2004.

It is impossible to speak or write of the Hall Project without making reference to the commitment and selfless dedication of the congregation of this Church. The Project arose from our faith that, as a Parish Church, we have a responsibility for all members of our local community, a responsibility of loving service. Our desire to create this resource for the benefit of all the community is our way of rising to the challenges of our faith and the needs we have identified around us. Many have given money, time and talents freely and generously. Quietly and prayerfully, without division or dissension, the congregation of this Church have sought to discern and act upon the

commandment of our Lord, that we should love God and our neighbours. Now there is a centre for both Church and Community to use, the design skilfully blending in with the Church itself.

At the beginning of this history the church is referred to as K.C.M. South Mymms. That was correct, as it was part of the parish of South Mymms. It was only in 2002 that the name was changed by Pastoral Order to King Charles the Martyr, Potters Bar.

So we come full circle in our history – with a clear indication that the life of the Church continues to flourish since its inception in the 1930's. New ventures have been made possible with the building of the new Halls Complex in 2003, including the award winning Open Door Café, which donates all profits to charity, as well as the development of other outreach activities such as Charlie's Angels (for young children and their carers) and the Wednesday Break Social Group (for those over 60). We also began running a Messy Church project for families in the autumn of 2013.

Today we give thanks to God for the vision and foresight of all those by whose hard work and determination the creation of this lovely Church was made possible and who have handed down the care of the building and its people to this generation. This work still continues to today, as we are currently planning a major refurbishment of the Church during 2015, funded by a generous legacy from the late Phyllis Hawkes – work which will include a new lighting scheme, total re-decoration, repairs to the leaded windows and a new floor – to enable the Church to continue to serve the community of Potters Bar for generations yet to come.

Other Sources

(1) Mike Aston (2) Gareth Randall (3) Nora Hipgrave's KCM Golden Jubilee Book

My thanks to Michael Burns and Jean and Robert Burt for their help in preparing this updated history

John Rowley July 2001 and updated July 2013

Missioners in the Conventional District

Francis G.M. Etherington	1937 - 39
John James Frank Scammel A.K.C.	1939 - 47

Vicars

Eldred Joscelyn Fellows-Brown M.A.	1947 - 53
Henry Albert Whittingham B.A.	1953 - 60
Walter Noel Chatterton Grainger	1960 - 67
Alfred David Hencken A.K.C.	1968 - 80
Raymond Howel Williams M.A.	1981 - 95
Diana Mary Williams B.Sc	1995 - 98

Priest in Charge

Michael John Burns A.K.C. 2000 - 12
Vicar and Hon. Canon of St Albans
Michael John Burns, A.K.C 2012-