

Welcome to Chipstead Church
A Historical Reflection
By Rev. John Wates OBE FRSA



Welcome to St. Margaret's Church, Chipstead, a building where there has been worship for 800 years and, probably, a place of worship for much longer. The ancient yew tree that blew down in the storm of 1987 traditionally marked a place of pre-Christian worship. It had been dated as being 1200 years old.

First Impressions

Within the simple beauty and harmony of the building, you will notice there is a central Aisle and two side Aisles. At the front of the church, you will notice a crossing underneath the Bell tower, with two matching Transepts, (North and South) either side. Beyond this where you can the altar is the peaceful Chancel.

The use of stone from Gatton and Reigate throughout the Church also gives a sense of unity to the building. Upper Greensand limestone beds ran from Brockham to Godstone and the quarries comprised over 16 kilometres of tunnelling.

But it did not always look like this. Up and till the 1880's the church was for many centuries a dark mis-shape building. There was no North Aisle. Instead, there was a forbidding stone wall with windows in it where the North Aisle columns now stand. Drawings of the church before the 19th century show an irregular roof – large to the South, truncated to the North. Worse than this. The South Transept burnt down sometime in the 17th century and was not rebuilt until Rector Peter Aubertin rebuilt it in 1855. Unlike many churches, in Chipstead we have a great deal for which to be thankful to the Victorians!

When was the church built and by whom?

The site of the church is itself a mystery. The bulk of the Parish's medieval housing is in Mugswell some distance from the church and where the old Rectory was to be found. The church sits right on the original edge of the Parish.

Perhaps it was close to the original Manor House. Perhaps it was as far as the builders wanted to drag the Reigate stone away from the access road in the valley. The present site is on the part of the Parish that has chalk as a soil. This would have been helpful in making the lime mortar used between all the stones in the church.

A Benchmark on the Northwest corner of the church tells us that it is 513.8ft above sea level. The oldest feature of the church is actually outside – the Norman doorway with zigzag molding and the remnant of what looks like a Viking 'Cat's head'. This was set into the North wall of the church when the North Aisle was built in 1882 (see below).

Most of what you see is the Early English building dating from the early 13th Century. The Church has claimed the date of 1180 as the date of the building; but this may be too early. If that was the date, the church would no sooner have been opened than it would have been shut. In a struggle between King

John and the Papacy, Pope Innocent III stopped English priests from holding religious services, known as 'the Interdict', and excommunicated King John between 1208 and 1214. If Sir Nikolaus Pevsner is correct in dating the church to the 13th Century, then it may be that we know the actual name of the builder of the church. In 1250, King Henry III was building around the Choir at Westminster Abbey using the same Gatton stone that was used at Chipstead and the royal accounts show that Roger of Reigate was the contractor. There is some evidence that teams of masons worked both in London (at Lambeth Palace, for example) and in Chipstead. It may be that Roger of Reigate was our man.

The Porch

Porches were an important part of church and village life. Marriages were contracted there – betrothal – and children educated there. The Chipstead Porch is a relatively modern fabric. There is an inscription over the entrance – 'Templa quam delecta': How lovely is your dwelling place. Psalm 84 verse 1.



The Font

Entering the church from the Porch, the first object you see is the Font. This is always placed by a church point of entry as Baptism in the font marks the start of the Christian's individual church life. The Chipstead Font is from the Decorated Period of Church architecture from 1307 to 1377. The tracery carving on the Font is quite crude. It stands on a circular base that dates from 1827 and is surmounted by a wooden top and carved dove. These are the work of a Parishioner and craftsman, Tom Baker. He used wood from the ancient Yew Tree that was blown down in the Great Storm of 15/16 October 1987. During WWII, the font was stored at Shabden, on the High Road, for safe keeping.

Monument to Sir Edward Banks

The 'handsome monument' to Sir Edward Banks contains representations of Waterloo and Southwark Bridge, both of which he built. Sir Edward Banks (1770 to 1835, Knighted 1822) rose from humble origins to become the leading public works contractor of the Victorian era. He came across Chipstead when he worked on the extension of the Surrey Iron Railway from Croydon to Merstham in 1803. He formed a partnership with the Lord of the Manor of Chipstead, Colonel Hylton Jolliffe MP – known as 'Hat Jolliffe'. Hylton Jolliffe was replaced in the partnership in 1807 by his brother Rev. William Jolliffe. In addition to their vast public works contracting business, Jolliffe and Banks were founders of the General Steam and Navigation Company – later to become the P & O Company. In 1821 Banks married into the Jolliffe family. He died at his daughter's house in Tilgate on the 5th of July 1835.

The Nave

The calm unity of the Nave comes from the 12-foot grid that the builders used. The space between the Nave pillars is 12 feet; the central space under the tower is a 12-foot square – its height is just under 24 foot. There are still signs that the original building had two solid walls where the pillars now stand. High on the South arcade you can see circular quatrefoil 'clerestory' windows – obviously looking to the outside of the Church. There are two very small windows in the wall forming the base of the Tower. This is a reminder that the pillars to the South of that Aisle cannot pre-date the 14th or 15th century construction of the South Aisle. The pillars on the North Aisle date from the construction of the North Aisle by Richard Norman Shaw in 1883.

Richard Norman Shaw was employed by Mr. Cattley of Shabden to remodel the North Aisle and West End of the Church. The building work was carried out by William Carruthers. The architect's fees amounted to £57. 7s. Norman Shaw designed many country houses, including the Baring family house in Banstead Woods – as well as concrete houses in Croydon! His most famous building was New Scotland

Yard. His contribution to Chipstead was ignored in the History of Chipstead Church by Hugh Scott Willey FRIBA. This was, perhaps, due to antipathy between the Royal Institute of British Architects, to which Scott Willey belonged, and The Royal Academy of which Norman Shaw was Treasurer.

The need for an extension is witness to the growth of the population in the late 19th century due to encroaching suburbanisation. The addition of the South Aisle four centuries before was due to large-scale sheep farming.

Mr. J. G. Cattley of Shabden funded all this work as well as purchasing the pews, which were not completed until 1896.

Priest's Vestry

Can be found to the left of the Entrance Door to the church. It has a Benefactor's Board setting out the donor's names and the amounts to be given to the poor by the Parish Overseers.

The Organ

Dates from the 1920's and replaces one that was installed in the mid-19th century when the old 'Singing Gallery' at the West end of the church was removed. The Choir Stalls were enlarged in the 1980's by Tom Baker, using material recuperated from the re-modelled South Transept.

The West Window and Door

Are by Norman Shaw and described as "extremely pretty" by Pevsner. The Window was given in memory of his wife, Laura, by Lord Marshall. Lord Horace Brooks Marshall, PC KCVO was a newspaper wholesaler (selling part of the business to W. H. Smith) and was Lord Mayor of London during the celebrations to mark the end of the First World War. He was a well-known local philanthropist. His daughter, Gwendoline, married J. Arthur Rank of Rank Hovis and Pinewood Studio fame.

The Eight Doors

There are a surprisingly large number of doors in St. Margaret's. There is the main door leading in from the Porch. Norman Shaw's West door was set fire to by Suffragettes in 1920. The most interesting door cannot be seen from inside the Church. It was placed behind the Tattersall monument when the North Aisle was created, and the wall taken down. There is a door leading out into the churchyard at the end of the North Aisle. And there is an ancient door giving access to the North Transept. This was originally an external door allowing the owners of Shabden (who had the sole use of the Transept) to avoid contact with the other Parishioners! There is a door in the South wall of the Chancel that also gave the Priest his own entrance to the Chancel. It was, after all, his own private property! It is now a cupboard. There is a door out of the East wall of the South Transept leading to the new Vestry (and to the toilet). And, finally, there is a small door high in the East wall of the South Aisle that allows access by ladder to the Bell Tower.

The North Transept

Was for many years the private preserve of the owners of Shabden Park. It was estimated that the family and staff accommodated in the North Transept was about forty persons. The names of the owners of Shabden are given in the windows and end with the ownership of Surrey County Council when it was turned into a Cottage Hospital in 1937. The owners benefited from their own private Stove (there was another one for all the other parishioners at the entrance to the church where the Font now stands). The Pulpit stood immediately in front of the Shabden transept along with the Readers Desk. As already noted, the North Transept had its own private door. This has a 'quatrefoiled oculus' over it.

This doorway has strong architectural features that are similar to work in Lambeth Palace leading experts to suggest that the same masons worked on both buildings (see Hugh Scott-Willey FRIBA). As this Transept could only be entered from outside by its West door it is considered that it may originally have been a medieval chantry or private chapel. It also has an aumbry and small piscina now hidden behind built-in cupboards.

The South Transept

Was re-built by the Rev. Peter Aubertin in 1855. The South windows contain the finest glass windows in the Church: the high circular window contains early 14th Century glass. Below it are excellent stained-glass windows dating from the 13th Century representing St. Peter (with his keys) to the East and St. Paul to the West. It is now home to the Regimental Flag of the 5th Canadian Regiment of Medium Artillery. The Regiment was stationed in the grounds of Cane Hill Hospital – there were very many Canadians camped in Chipstead in the run up to D Day. The Regimental Flag was going to be ‘disposed of’ when the Hospital closed in 1992. We asked that it should be housed in St. Margaret’s as a permanent reminder of the debt we owed to our cousins ‘across the pond’ who helped us in our hour of need. A presentation was made by the Canadian Military Attache – the congregation welcomed him and the official party by singing the Canadian National Anthem: “O Canada! Our home and native land”.



The New Vestry/ Parish Office

A new Vestry, leading off the South Chancel, was added in the 1970’s, by Canon Christopher Blair-Fish. This enabled the Church to provide an area for teaching the increasing number of children as well as kitchen and toilet facilities.

The Central Space Under the Tower

An excellent example of Early English vaulting. The chamfered transverse ribs meet in a beautifully carved central boss representing a rose. The four pillars carrying the tower have an outward curvature. This could be an architectural feature known as an ‘entasis’ or just the effect of settling as the tower grew in height. In any event, there has been some cracking to the structure in recent times and this is monitored by glass ‘tell- tales’ that can be seen in the South Transept wall. A doorway from the South Aisle to the South Transept was filled in by Lord Hylton in 1895-6 to help buttress up the tower after some movement had taken place. (Scott Willey p.9). Because of this weakness the bells have only been ‘clapped’ not ‘swung’ since 1881.

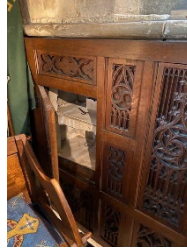
The Chancel

On first glance the chancel appears to be very old but was in fact largely restored by the Rector Peter Aubertin. The Rectors were responsible for the upkeep of the Chancel – the congregation took responsibility for the remainder of the Church. The timbers for the Chancel roof therefore came from the Rector’s Glebe lands.

The most interesting feature of the Chancel (to the expert eye!) is the set of windows. The narrowness of the openings – 4 inches – and the fact that they are fitted with ‘triangular heads’ makes them a rarity. They may be a survivor from an earlier church. The large East window is a reconstruction of the 15th century window destroyed in the war. The most serious bomb damage in the village was a house due East of the church that took a direct hit, killing the inhabitants. It was probably this that blew out the East window. The stained-glass fragments were pieces recovered by Peter Aubertin the Younger and his wife from a wide collection of sources.

The Two Stone Benches on the North and South Walls

The carving on the benches is reminiscent of Greek ornamentation. At one time these two benches would have been the only seating in the church to allow the elderly and infirm to sit 'with their backs to the wall'.



The Altar Rail

Was a 16th century requirement; among other things it was to keep 'ye dogges' out!

There is wood panelling near the altar contains an aumbry (a recessed cabinet for holding 'sacred vessels') and a piscina (a shallow basin used



for washing the Communion vessels). These are the surviving evidence of Anglo Catholic worship in the 19th century.

There are two carved chairs known as 'Sedilia' on the north wall for the Priest and Deacon. Unusually, these are on the North as there is not room for them on the South wall due to the presence of the stone bench.



Protected by carpeting, there is a 'monumental brass' above the altar steps to the memory of Lucy, daughter of Lactansius Roper, who died on 24th February 1614 aged 'above 23 years of age'. Lactansius was the name of the advisor to the first Christian Emperor of Rome, Constantine. Lucy Roper's inscription reads "Christus mihi vita mors mihi lucrum" 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain'. Philippians 1. v21. Near to Lucy's brass are some very old, glazed floor tiles. One depicts a dragon.

Again, protected by carpets in the chancel floor are some fine 'Incised slabs'. One of them is to the memory of John Hamden the Rector from 1611 until his death in 1631, and his wife Alice. Alice was the daughter of the celebrated theologian, Richard Hooker, known as the 'Judicious Hooker' for trying to find an accommodation between Protestantism and Catholicism. However, Hooker's marriage to his landlord's daughter, Alice's mother, was thought to be a 'fatal mistake'. The exposed tombstone of Jemimah Parker just beyond the chancel is made of Touch, the black marble imported from Tournai in Belgium.

The Tabard

Hanging from the South wall bears the armorial bearings of Anthony Stephens. It would have been carried at his funeral in Epsom in 1695. The tabard was surmounted by his helmet and crest up until 1965, when it was stolen. Anthony Stephens second wife, Mary, survived him for 60 years. The Mary Stephens Foundation, which she founded in 1746, still gives grants to local children under 25.

Rood Screen

Dates from the Perpendicular period of English Church architecture – towards the end of the 15th Century. The Royal Arms are those of George III, dating from 1801 – 1814.



The Bells

There are five bells of which the Tenor (the largest) is the oldest dating from 1595. It was made by Richard Eldridge of Chertsey. Four of the bells bear the legend "Our hope is in the Lord" – the message that rings out across the Parish whenever they are rung. One of the later bells, also by Richard Eldridge dates from 1607; two from 1658 (both made by John Hodson); the most recent was made in 1785 by William Mears and states that Rev. John Griffiths

was the Rector and Simon Rose, and Elias Few were the Churchwardens. Both the bells by Richard Eldridge were found in 1952 to be in a poor state and were recast using the original metal. The other bells were given an eighth turn at the same time.

Church Exterior

Originally, Reigate stone was used on the outside walls of the Church. Unfortunately, it is not resistant to weather over the centuries. Sir Christopher Wren complained about its use in the Old St. Paul's: "That which is most to be lamented is the unhappy choice of materials, the stone is decayed and falls off in great scales." As Reigate stone is no longer quarried, Richemont Bleu, from the Cognac area of France, has had to be substituted as necessary.

The Church is now faced with flint. It is so dense and hard that it cannot absorb any water making it a very durable material – the opposite of Reigate stone.

The Tower may have started off as a watchtower as it has a wide view. Note the louvred 'windows'; allowing the bells to be heard. A weathervane tells us that the Tower was topped off in 1754 although the parapet was renovated in 1903.

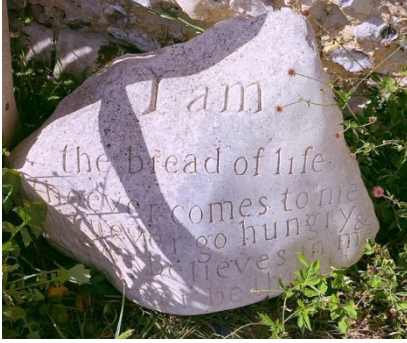


The Orchard, situated in the Churchyard

Ian Thirlwall, who supervised the works for the Orchard writes: "In 2012 a significant addition to the Fabric of St. Margaret's Church occurred when the Orchard, as it became known, was officially opened on September 9th. The Orchard became our "Junior Church", a holy place where our children from 2 to 16 years could learn about

the teachings of Jesus: loving one another, caring for our neighbours, and helping those in need.

We saw the need for this space in 2006 when the Church family grew, particularly the children of our adult congregation. It then took us three years to define the function of our spatial requirements and the form of the building. A further year was spent overcoming planning difficulties before we obtained the Planning consent for the building. The Planners, following pressure from local residents, wanted the building to have the least visual impact on our Grade 1 listed church as well as the outstanding natural beauty of our surrounding area. So we "sunk" it into the eastern hillside of our church in an area which was once an old orchard. The children were asked to name their holy placeand chose 'The Orchard'. The Architect was David Brewer of Brewer Jewel Architects."



Churchyard

There are sculptured stones in the Churchyard showing the various "I am" sayings of Jesus. To the West of the Church door are elaborate memorials to the Tattersall and Walpole families; Lord Marshall lies to the East of the Church. There are numerous 'War Grave Commission Memorials' to those who fell in the Two World Wars.

The Friends of St. Margaret's

The PCC gratefully acknowledges the vital and generous support of the Friends of St. Margaret's in helping to finance works associated with the building.

Note on St. Margaret of Antioch

St. Margaret is a Saint who is celebrated on July 20th – the Chipstead Flower Show is still held 'within the octave' of the Feast of St. Margaret. St. Margaret lived in Pisidian Antioch, now in Turkey. Legend has it that she was betrothed to Olybrius, an important Roman Governor. But when she refused to renounce her Christian religion, he had her tortured. During one of these episodes, she was swallowed by a dragon. She escaped alive when the cross she carried irritated the dragons innards. She was a popular Saint having more than 250 churches named after her in England alone – the most famous being St. Margaret's, Westminster which was built at the same time as St Margaret's in Chipstead. She was a multi-tasking Saint who could help in childbirth, pregnant women, dying people, kidney disease, peasants, exiles and falsely accused people! The Diocese of Southwark has some official documents that name our church "Saint Margaret the Green" due to misplacing the comma in its postal Address: "Saint Margaret's, The Green, Chipstead"!