

The History and Life of St Mark's

A Presentation given by Michael L Ford, late Churchwarden, The Parish Church of St Mark the Evangelist, Hadlow Down on 22nd March 2014 based on the original talk given during the celebrations of the Centenary of the Consecration of the present church on 25th October 2013.

Last October, we celebrated the centenary of the consecration of this church on 25th October 1913. That day, 100 years ago, was a big day for Hadlow Down. A large crowd of over 300 people gathered to welcome the RR Charles Ridgeway, Bishop of Chichester, into this building for a service of Consecration to start a century of continuous worship. He was accompanied by the Rural Dean and many local clergy including the Vicars of St Mary's Buxted and St Margaret's Buxted Park, and of course the Vicar, Rev John Warner.



Parish Church of St Mark the Evangelist

But the story and history of the church really begins some 80 years before that and it is the story of a building, a family and a house. The house is the Grange. In 1835, it was called Buxted Lodge and it was owned by Benjamin Hall. The hamlets of Hadlow Down and Five Ashes consisted of a few houses belonging to gentle people, many prosperous farms besides a multitude of small farms worked by what were called smock frock farmers and probably 150 labourer's cottages. For some time Mr Hall had been writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury and anyone else he could think of who might help get a church for the Hamlet, reportedly including the King and the Duke of Wellington. He explained that not only worshippers had to walk 3 – 5 miles to get to the churches in Buxted Park and Mayfield but also that there were many poor children wandering about the lanes in ignorance of almost any duty, moral or religious. The Archbishop eventually agreed to allow a church to be built but said there was no money. A public subscription was opened which raised about £1200 towards the estimated cost of £1800. Over 100 Donors contributed sums ranging from Lord Liverpool of Buxted Park's £100 to several of five shillings. The remainder was obtained from various sources and the church was built. The Archbishop of Canterbury, William Howley, who had also donated £100, had a free date in his diary and agreed to consecrate the church on 6th May 1836.



The Original Church 1836 -1910 as seen from the Main Road

The new church was built on land donated by the Earl and Countess De La Warr for a church, school and vicarage. It was dedicated to St Mark and was to serve a new District created from parts of the parishes of Buxted and Mayfield, stretching from Spotted Cow Lane in the West to what is now known as the A267. At that time Five Ashes was an even smaller hamlet than Hadlow Down and making the boundary the road meant that the Five Ashes was split between the parishes of Mayfield and our soon to be formed parish. This situation remained formally unchanged for over 150 years. Once a chapel was built on the other side of the road, informal arrangements to treat Five Ashes as part of Mayfield were agreed between the two incumbents.

Not to be out-done, Benjamin Hall added four acres to the land donated by Lord De la Warr. The new church land extended down School Lane to and including the access field to the playing fields and along the Main Road to just past what is now known as the Old Vicarage. The School was opened about 2 years later and the Vicarage soon after that, after another public subscription to pay for it. Over time, the land has been used for the School House built for the Headteacher, social housing along School Lane and more recently, St Mark's Field, and for a new village burial ground controlled by the parish council.

By the turn of the century, the church building was showing signs of wear and in danger of falling down. Charles Lang Huggins, a London Stockbroker and now the owner of the Grange, was a great nephew of Benjamin Hall who inspired the original church. He offered to build a new church at his own expense. It is probable that he was pushed towards this by his very devout wife, Agnes, who had always been very active in her support of the church and school. In subsequent years she would come across for low mass in the Lady Chapel every morning. G.H Fellowes Prynne, a prominent London architect was engaged to design and supervise the rebuilding.

The foundations and part of the original walls and tower formed the basis for the nave of the new building. An extension to the East incorporated the Chancel and Sanctuary together with the Lady Chapel, Choir Vestry and Sacristy. It was believed that the tower and spire of the old church were retained in this church. However, we now believe that the Tower and Spire were rebuilt from the foundations up. Indeed the spire may have been removed earlier because of the structural problems that the building was having. A picture postcard in circulation in 1912 shows the old church without a spire.



Building the Present Church 1912

When actually rebuilding, it is interesting that contemporary photographs show that they started building the chancel extension before doing much to the nave.

The final account of the builders, Miller & Selmes of Eastbourne, who were the lowest of twelve tenders, was £3,724. 1. 0. We have detailed bills for most of the interior fittings, lighting, heating etc which amounted to about another £1,300. Add to that Architect's fees of £305. 6. 3. and Faculty and Consecration costs of £19. 0. 6. meant that the Charles Lang Huggins' outlay was about £5,400 in 1913 money. It was quite a tidy sum for a personal investment in the parish, and this was long before Gift Aid on such donations gave tax advantages.



Inside the Church circa 1917

The church was fitted out in the Anglo Catholic tradition. The handsome High Altar, which has a marble Mensa inserted in the top surface, was backed by an ornate reredos and Dorsal curtains. The Mensa is not usually visible as it is covered by the altar linen.

The altar rail choir and priests' stalls are in matching carved oak behind a screen of 17th century ironwork adapted to the purpose, in recognition of the part the local iron industry played in the village's past. The screen is not to everyone's taste and on one occasion at an Archdeacon's Visitation, the Chancellor of the diocese, a distinguished High Court judge, seated in one of the priests stalls commented that this was the first time he had been put behind bars.

The pulpit has more modern ironwork designed to match the screen. Apart from the change from gas lighting to electric lighting in 1931, it all remained largely unchanged until 2001 when we installed the carpeted dais in front of the chancel steps and a moveable forward altar table to cater for the modern fashion of priests consecrating the Eucharist facing the congregation.



Inside the church circa 1999

Seating was in the chairs that you are sitting on now - rather uncomfortable. But be consoled that you are sitting on a piece of antique furniture. Originally they were in rows of seven battened down on the floor. You can still see the marks on the floor where the battens were screwed. Around 1945 the outside two chairs on each side were removed to provide side aisles. They all remained in that formation until 1999 when we unscrewed the last three rows to make more room at the back of the church for socialising after services – the centre aisle tended to get rather crowded and people at the front had to fight their way out. At the front was a book rail for the first row of chairs.



Inside the Church circa 2013

This gave us much greater flexibility in the use of the church, both for services and for other events, such as craft fairs and one glorious Barn Dance. It also allowed the school to use the church more and there is now a weekly family and friends' assembly in the church, where the School children sit on one side and parents and friends sit facing them. This is also very effective for the School's special services for Easter, Harvest etc.



Set up for School Assembly 2013

The Lady Chapel is a lovely place for private prayer and the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the Tabernacle on the altar. We now have a said communion service on one day a week in the chapel. It is dominated by the painting above the altar by EA Fellowes Prynne, RA, and the brother of the architect, which he entitled the Magnificat. It was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1897 and purchased by Mr Huggins for his private chapel in the Grange before being given to the church. The central figure of the Virgin Mary holds the infant Jesus who is himself holding a book inscribed the Magnificat, with the boy John the Baptist looking on. The whole is a hymn of praise to the Incarnation in which Heaven and Earth join with the Virgin Mother when she sings in her heart "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoice in God my Saviour." There are many more interesting details in the picture and it is worth reading the Artist's own description of it, which in the Lady Chapel.

There are two other pictures in the Chapel. On the West wall is a painting of Madonna and the Child. The name of the painter is unknown. It was originally bought by Mr Huggins and is thought to date from about 1890. The other painting, "Virgin in Glory with two Saints" by Pinturicchio (1454-1513) is not thought to be an original.

I think the most attractive feature of the chapel is the group of six stained glass windows presented by their nine children in memory of Charles Lang Huggins and his wife Agnes. They depict the Christian year through wild flowers and with verses in Olde English. These come from an 1878 book by Thomas Ignatius Forster with a catchy descriptive title "Circle of

the seasons and perpetual key to the calendar and almanak". It is a fascinating book and can be found on the Internet and the verses are on page 56 if anyone wants to read the whole poem. There are some greeting cards available at the back with photos by Homer Cox of the six windows.



The Lady Chapel

As far as I am aware, there are only a few things remaining from the old church. The stone font dates from 1833 but the wood and metal cover was presented in about 1919. There is a memorial tablet to the first Vicar, Rev William Edwards, on the wall of the choir vestry. There is also a large bible which was presented in 1900 which is on the large lectern today. By a comparison of photographs, I think that the priedieu or kneeler that is today in front of the bishop's chair in the Sanctuary came from the old church seen in the centre aisle in the next two slides.

The original church had no organ but music was provided by what we would now call a music group of bass viol, bassoon and clarinet later supported by a choir of variable size. The seating arrangements in the church were very interesting – with the exception of a few families who had their own pews, the men had the north aisle, the women and married men the south side and the boys and girls of the Sunday school filled the west benches.

The first organ was built into the new building and lasted to 1938 when a second reconditioned organ was bought for £312.2.6. Fund raising by fetes etc since 1936 had produced £226 .7.4. The balance came from an anonymous donation of £100 which also paid for an electric blower.

In 1967, a third organ, again second hand, was purchased but was never very good despite several attempts to add or improve the pipes. Eventually a major study to identify suitable and affordable replacements concluded that a pipe organ would cost far too much and settled on the Makin's electronic organ we have today. After a trial week or two with the

organ sitting in the chancel, the congregation, the PCC and, most importantly, Charles Smith the organist, accepted that it would meet our requirements. It cost just under £6000 plus VAT. The pipes sitting above the organ were kept from the previous one as decoration to fill the void that would have been left without them.

The original Church was not the first or only place of Christian worship in the village. In 1824, Henry Smith, the owner of Hyders, a Wesleyan, built a chapel for a small congregation that had been meeting in Grange Cottages. In 1849, they moved to the new Providence Chapel on the main road. Sometimes irreverently known as the Chanting House, it thrived for 138 years until the October 1987 Hurricane removed its roof. It never recovered and it is now a private dwelling. The plot is still owned by the Trustees of the Chapel who tend and maintain the graves that surround the building. Around 1900, Mr Donkin, the owner of the Gate House, opened a small Baptist Chapel in a tin hut, named by the schoolchildren and thereafter known as Tin Heaven. He later moved it up the hill to the site of what is now B&S Valeting in School Lane. It continued to operate until the last minister, Pastor Halford, died in 1939 and it closed in 1940. Before it closed, it was used as a canteen for feeding the schoolchildren at the beginning of the Second World War after the School and village had received some 100 children evacuated from Lewisham.



Inside the old church

We do not know a great deal about the pattern of worship in the old church but they seemed to be set up in the Anglo Catholic tradition and it is assumed that this continued from the start. For the new church, we do know that on the day after the Consecration, there were services of matins and evensong. We do have some very interesting hand written notes from the period 1928-1939 compiled by the incumbent from 1931, Father Warlow which gives a glimpse of what life was like in the 1930s. Prior to 1933, Sunday morning worship consisted of sung Mass and sermon at 10.15 and sung matins and sermon at 11.15 but Father Warlow disliked the idea of having to prepare and preach two sermons and so changed it to said matins at 10am followed by a sermon at 10.30 followed by Sung Mass at 10.50, with the sermon covering both services. He recorded that the re-arrangement was generally approved. However, there was later some reaction from the

Matins congregation that wanted to get back to a sung matins, which needed the bishop to negotiate a peace deal.



Inside the church circa 1933

The celebration of the St Mark's Day was on the actual day, rather than the nearest Sunday and it was always with a High Mass with visiting clergy acted as deacon and sub-deacon and a full team of servers – MC, Crucifer, Thurifer and boat boy, 2 acolytes and often two further torch bearers for the consecration. It was usually attended by the schoolchildren. A feature of this period was considerable mutual support with clergy from other churches, particularly, St Mary's Buxted and St Bartholomew's, Brighton. During Lent, there was always a series of special addresses on a Tuesday afternoon by visiting clergy with an average attendance of between 40 and 50. There was a full range of services at Easter and Holy week, including the 3 hour Good Friday Liturgy usually taken by a visiting priest while Father Warlow went elsewhere. There was a said mass on Holy Saturday at 7.45 am and the blessing of the Paschal candle and solemn evensong at 8pm.

Contemporary reports in 1936 indicate that the normal pattern of services by then was Holy Communion at 7am and 8am, a short break and then Matins at 10am and Sung Mass at 11am. It did not record if there was a Sunday school in the afternoon, which was quite probable. Then there was Evensong at 6.30, after which a very tired vicar was able to go home to supper.

I mentioned earlier that there were two non-conformist chapels in the village. Generally relations between the three were reasonably good but the fact that all children in the village went to the Church of England School did sometimes cause problems. At the end of 1934, the Baptist Pastor Halford, who was one of the school's managers representing the parish council, went to the school and discovered that the Angelus was said daily at Noon, a practice introduced a few years previously by Father Gurney. The Pastor, outraged at this

practice, got up a petition signed by nine pairs of parents protesting against Anglo Catholic teaching and especially against quote “supplication to the Virgin Mary, none such being in the book of common prayer”. There was great hoo-haa in the village, the Baptists’ children were kept out of school until after morning assembly; there were special meetings of the parish council and public meetings, and feelings were running high in the village. The Local Education Authority got involved and some children were withdrawn from the school. In the end, because of the likelihood of more children being withdrawn, Father Warlow got the practice stopped, which most of the congregation supported, although inevitably some thought it a weak step.



The Red Triangle Hut

However, things settled down again into peaceful co-existence. The centenary of the consecration of the original chapel was duly celebrated in 1936 and life went on. Pastor Halford and Father Warlow jointly held a service in the Red Triangle Hut in celebration of the Coronation of George VI in 1937. The Red Triangle Hut (named after the symbol of the YMCA, from whom the hut was obtained) was a forerunner of the village hall and was opened in 1921 by the Princess Marie Louise. It lasted to 1965 when it was demolished and the current village Hall built on the site.

Let me now leap forward to the 1970s, first to a remarkable example of cooperation between church and village. The School was in need of further accommodation and in 1974, the village held a 9 day Autumn Festival to raise funds for a new building for the school. The church and its members were heavily involved. Many details of the Festival are shown in the display. The church was directly involved, not only in services on the two Sundays but with a flower festival and a number of concerts in the church. There was a wide range of other events every day among which was the world’s first Jigsawtium in which many people competed to complete identical jigsaws, provided by Waddingtons. The church was well represented on the organising committee and overall it was a splendid example of church/village cooperation. The Festival concluded with a Songs of Praise in the church. A

new temporary building was eventually added in 1976, which continued to be used for a short time into this century before being demolished.



The Autumn Village Festival

It is clear that the church owes a great deal to the generosity of the Huggins family, particularly Benjamin Hall and Charles Lang Huggins. To this should be added his daughter Elsie Maud, who married Brigadier Edward Costello VC. She left a substantial endowment to the church to be used to maintain the fabric and pay for an incumbent. The latter matter no longer applies but the former provision, which gives us around £5,000 a year, has been hugely beneficial and one wonders how we would have been able to keep the church in a reasonable state without it. Amongst other things, the fund, known as the Costello Trust paid for the new organ in 1993 and made up the balance for our re-shingled spire.

It was thought until very recently that Brigadier Costello had married Sylvia Huggins but recent sight of the actual will shows that it was Elsie not Sylvia who caught the Brigadier. He was awarded the VC in 1897 when a 23 year old Lieutenant at Malakand on the Indian Frontier when he went out under a hail of fire to rescue one of his Indian soldiers who had been badly wounded. He was buried in the churchyard in 1949 after a distinguished army career which included service in the First World War and receipt of several additional significant decorations. Other members of the family played smaller parts over the years, including churchwarden.



The Huggins family December 1912

*Standing from the left: Betty Huggins, Rupert Huggins, Gilbert Huggins, Christine Huggins, Elsie Huggins, Kitty Costello, Eddie Costello V.C. Sylvia Costello nee Huggins, Basil Huggins, Cuthbert Huggins.
Sitting: John Maffey [Lord Rugby] Mrs C.L. Huggins, with granddaughter Penelope Maffey, Charles Lang Huggins, Dorothy Maffey nee Huggins.*

The Huggins Family

There are two poignant permanent reminders of the family and its association with the church. Firstly, the stained glass window behind the font is dedicated to Martin Maffey, who died and was buried at sea in 1909 at the age of 4 months. He was the son of John Maffey (later Lord Rugby) and his wife Dorothy, one of Charles' daughters. One can only imagine the anguish that must have caused in the family. The other is the memorial plaque in the Lady Chapel in memory of Charles' three eldest grandsons killed in the Second World War. The last surviving grandson, Ulric, lived for a long time in the Wilderness in Wilderness Lane and was active in village affairs including being chairman of the working party that purchased and developed the village playing fields. After moving to Waldron, he often came back for the Harvest Lunches. His funeral was held here in St Mark's in 2001.

There have been many other benefactors over the years, many of them anonymous, who have contributed to our growth or made important gifts. I cannot mention them all but would perhaps highlight a few. The Rood Cross over the entrance to the chancel came from Oberammergau and given by the Rev B Spink when the church was rebuilt.



Stained Glass Window in memory of Martin Maffey, aged 4months

The Stations of the Cross were painted by the Baroness Coudenhove. She was born in 1880 in Eastbourne as Elsie Henderson and is known by that name as a respectable professional artist, sculptor, draughtsman and lithographer. She married Baron de Coudenhove and moved to Guernsey in 1928. On his death in 1946, she returned to live with her sister in Wilderness Lane. She continued painting and presented the 14 Stations in 1953. She and her sister are buried in the churchyard. We will be having a service of Stations of the Cross here on Wednesday 9th April at 10.30am.

The impressive Enamelled processional cross, which is standing in the chancel, was donated in 1934 in memory of the fourth Viscount Hood. His grave is just outside the choir vestry in a hedge labyrinth. The family lived at Skippers Hill.

It is unusual for a village war memorial to be inside the church and I am afraid I don't know why - probably the area around the church was too congested with graves. As we approach the centenary of the start of the First World War it is appropriate to comment that over 100 men from this small village served in the war of which 46 did not return. There are 6 Commonwealth War Graves from that war in the churchyard and we have the responsibility of maintaining them. A Hadlow Down branch of the British Legion was formed in 1928, the chairman of which was Major Gilbert Huggins, and included a Women's Section. The president was Brigadier Godfrey-Faussett, who lived in Annes in Wilderness Lane; he and his family were great supporters of the church and village in the 20s and 30s, very active with Scouts and Guides and with the forerunner to the Variety Club, the Pied Pipers. With the war memorial in the church, we now have an annual British Legion remembrance service here in the warm. When the village branch was active, there was usually a parade which marched down the main road to a service in the church.

This slide shows such a parade in the 50s led by the Mayfield Silver band with Standards fluttering in the breeze. When membership declined by natural wastage and the branch amalgamated with the Mayfield Branch in 1978, these standards of the Branch and the Women's Section were laid up in the church and hang beside the war memorial.



The British Legion Standards beside the War Memorial

It is interesting to note that the Grange and most of its owners have been directly associated with the church from 1836 to a few years ago when Barbara Ball downsized to Hardly Beacon. As mentioned earlier, Charles Lang had nine children and as they began to marry and produce children, so the Grange was extended several times to the west to make it a very large house indeed. In order to achieve the extensions, a small cottage in the grounds was moved across the road and is now known as Corner Cottage. Mr Huggins moved to Eastbourne in 1919 but still maintained his contacts with the village and church, until he died after which the Grange was sold. At that time it had seven reception rooms, a billiard room, 30 bed and dressing rooms and four bathrooms and a chapel.

The new owner, a local builder, Ticehurst, soon proceeded to demolish the central part which led to the creation of three new dwellings along the main road – Little Manor, Middle Manor and Little Manor Lodge. The splendid doors and other wood and accoutrements from the demolished parts were then re-cycled by the builder into various new bungalows in Framfield.



The Grange 1919

Charles Lang Huggins died in Eastbourne on 15th April 1933 at the age of 85. A Requiem was held in St Peters Church before bringing him back to Hadlow Down. The Church was packed for the funeral service and reportedly abounded with floral tributes. His wife Agnes died in 1947 at the age of 89 and is buried with him in the South East Corner of the church yard, just outside the Lady Chapel.

I could have gone on for much longer but I hope I have given you an outline of the history and a flavour of what life was like. I am greatly indebted to Peter Gillies for all the work he did in producing the Hadlow Down Autobiography to celebrate the Millennium, and for lending me his extensive archive of photographs and exhibits which have been a major source for this talk and the Display around the church. I would also thank Keith Edwards for taking many of the contemporary photographs and processing all the illustrations for this presentation and also for helping in the designing and setting up the display. I commend the Autobiography of the village to you and suggest you beg or borrow a copy from someone if you don't have one. If you have any questions, I will try to answer them



The exhibition in church October 2013