

## Our Living Churchyard

Believe it or not, our churchyards are teeming with life! Over 200 species of plants grow there for those who know what to look for. There are four different types of dandelion flowers and also four different types of buttercup plants. There also many rarer species growing here because the soil has been left undisturbed for decades and the churchyard has been managed for wildlife protection. Sit under the beech tree and listen to the nuthatch. Maybe you will see him walking down the trunk head first. See how many different types of birds you can see here. Also look out for the butterflies and other insects visiting the uncut wildflowers between the graves in the spring and summer-time. Our churchyard may be peaceful but it really is a hive of activity for nature lovers.

## Vicars at The Lee

Stephen S. Crutch	1854 - 1891
Alfred Wernick	1891 - 1894
James Britton	1894 - 1909
Reginald Palmer	1909 - 1914
Constantine O. Phipps	1914 - 1921
Edward J. Payne	1922 - 1926
Kenneth W. Mumford	1926 - 1937
John F. Carter	1937 - 1956
Edgar O. Williams	1956 - 1966
Edward Ayckroyd-Jones	1966
William S.H. Hallett	1966 - 1968
Cyril Warner	1969 - 1974
Alan Paice	1974 - 1985
George de Burgh-Thomas	1987 - 1996
David Burgess	1997 -

Please feel free to keep a copy of this leaflet. You may if you wish make a donation towards the running costs of the church.

## St John The Baptist Church – The Lee A Short History

### The Old Church

Christian worship has taken place at the village now known as The Lee since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The Old Church, as we now refer to the church building in the grounds behind the current Parish Church, was formerly called Lee (or Ley – Old English for a clearing in a wood) Chapel, a chapel to Weston Turville, granted by the family of Turville to the Abbey of Missenden, which was run by the Cistercian Monks. The first Minister was probably John Slithurst – monk of Missenden in 1540.



The Reformation initiated by Henry the VIII placed the Missenden Abbey into the hands of the King who sold off the monks' property.

The manor of the Ley then passed to the Russel family, then to the Plaistowe family and then to the Deering family. The Old Church was dedicated to St John the Baptist.

In 1832 the population of Lee, as it was then known, was 198. The Minister was the Reverend Isaac King, whose income was £50 per annum. The first resident clergyman, appointed in 1847, was the Reverend W Walton.

### The New Church



In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the original church, now referred to as the Old Church, was in need of repair and was becoming too small for its growing congregation. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1865, one of the then local dignitaries, Mr William Callow, called a meeting at his house – The Firs in Lee. He invited the then Vicar of Lee Church, the Reverend Spicer Crutch M.A. and Mr Abraham Watson, of the Manor House in Lee, to meet with an architect friend of Mr Callow – Mr Augustus Frere – to discuss the possibility of building a new Parish Church. In that month a sum of £325 was pledged by those present at the meeting.

The project was delayed for two years by some wrangling between the instigators and the then Bishop – the Right Reverend Samuel Wilberforce – about who should be the Architect. However, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1867 the present site was proposed and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1867 the Lord of the Manor, Mr John Plaistowe, agreed the site of the new Church and promised to donate the necessary land.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 1867 the building of the New Church was started by Honour the Builder, with Mr Frere as the supervising architect. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1869 the service in the Old Church was held for the last time, and on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February, the Consecration Service for the new Church took place. The collection for that service attended by the Rural Dean and local dignitaries amounted to £340. It was followed by a luncheon for the visitors at the Manor House given by Mr Watson.

Within those 4 years (1865-1869) a sum of £1,902 11s 1d was raised in the parish for the project.

Like the Old Church, the new Lee Church is dedicated to the life and work of John the Baptist. Currently both churches built in the one graveyard continue to be used for services. In 2007, the New Church has regular mid-week and Sunday services and the Old Church has regular bi-monthly Sunday services.

The Ecclesiastical Parish of ‘The Lee’ as it came to be called was enlarged in 1897 by the addition of an area known as ‘the Swanbottom district’, previously held by the Wendover Parish.

In 1908, it was suggested that the Church be enlarged, owing to the then large congregations. This work was delayed until the Autumn of 1909 while a new vicar was installed – the Reverend Reginald Palmer.

At this time, the new Lord of the Manor was Mr Arthur Lasenby Liberty, a picture of whom hangs in the current vestry. He had already given land for the vicarage, contributed additional land to extend the graveyard, and contributed to the restoration of the Old Church, which later became part of the Old Church Trust. He now took a leading role in the new developments in enlarging the New Church, and in order to prevent any unnecessary delay, he underwrote the whole of the building costs.

Thus in 1910, thanks to the generosity of the Liberty family, the New Church was enlarged by two transepts, a new vestry and a baptistry. Also added were the mosaic re-flooring of the nave, an east and a west stained glass window, the carved oak roof, the choir stalls, choir screens and pulpit, the oak panelling and the metal sets of candelabra and a chamber for the heating furnace, together with the new pipes and radiators. Money collected by the congregation was in the order of £550. The remainder required by the project (£3,000) was donated by the then Mr and Mrs Liberty.

The designs for the structural alterations were prepared by G H Fellowes Prynne and the building work was carried out by Honour and Son (Tring) – the same builders as used in the original church building (1867-1869). The internal decorative works were prepared by F Terrell Brown, under the supervision of J Llewellyn and A Liberty, and were carried out by Messrs Liberty of London.

The original foundation stone for the New Church was lifted and repositioned for the new work on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1910. Beneath this repositioning was placed a tin box, containing a copy of ‘The Times’ for 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1910; a coin (believed to be a penny); and a newly minted 1910 half crown. The re-dedication of the enlarged Church of St John the Baptist of The Lee took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1911. The service was led by The Bishop of Oxford.

The present structure of the New Church is very much as it was in 1911. However, a number of items have been donated over the intervening years by generous benefactors. The organ was given by Lady Liberty, in remembrance of Sir Arthur Liberty, who died in 1917. After the First World War, the Reverend Constantine Phipps donated a silver altar cross and two silver candlesticks in memory of his two sons, who were killed in that war. Regrettably, both these candle sticks were stolen in 1973 (security has recently been much improved). The processional cross is in memory of Mrs Phipps.

The Church lighting has been updated from gas to electrical lighting and the coal-fired furnace is now heated by oil. The pine pews have been refurbished to match the oak furniture of the choir and altar areas.