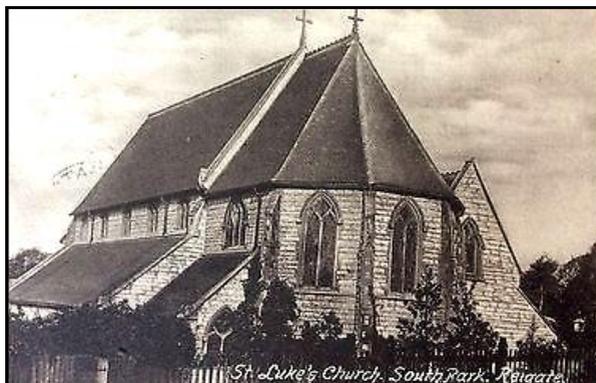


A BRIEF HISTORY  
1871–2021  
**ST LUKE'S CHURCH**  
REIGATE  
150 YEARS



Updated and expanded from the 2015 Booklet  
With much material taken from the 75th Anniversary Booklet



## THE BIRTH OF ST LUKE'S REIGATE

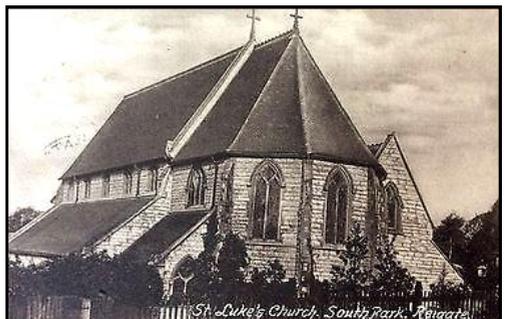
For centuries, people living amongst the lanes and fields of south west Reigate who wanted to go to church would have had to trek over the hill to St Mary's. In the 1860s, however, with the population growing towards 1,000 there was a need for a new church building in the area. By this time there were already new churches at St John's, St Mark's and St Matthew's in Redhill.



Services were first held in the Mission Hall (pictured left) in Park Lane East, which was originally built as an adult school for men by Mr W.C. Alexander. The services were taken by the Rev John P. Wright who went on to become the first Vicar of the new Church. The Mission Hall was later gifted to Luke's in 1919 by Mr C.C. Alexander in memory of his father.

Fundraising, mainly by local people, produced £3,000, which at the time was enough to pay for the nave and one of the aisles, so the go-ahead was given for the new church building. John Lees, a local architect, produced the design. To be a proper church at that time, the building had to be in the Gothic style, imitating the cathedrals and churches of previous centuries.

The builder of the Church was William Carruthers, a Scottish mason who had come south some years earlier bringing only his craftsman's skills and his bag of tools. Before long he was running projects and had built St Mark's and St Matthew's using 'Reigate stone' (hardened chalk) from quarries on Colley Hill.



William Carruthers was later elected Mayor of Reigate.

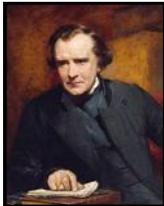
By 1871 the building was ready. It was consecrated on 30<sup>th</sup> January that year and so the life of St Luke's Church formally began.

The new building with its freshly cut Reigate stone was a focal point for the village, and to this day there is no building of comparable interest in South Park.



The North Aisle, Vestry, Organ Chamber and a new entrance with porch were added in 1882. The west end of the Church was left unfinished with a temporary lath and plaster wall. A scheme for its completion was being prepared in 1914 when the outbreak of World War One prevented further progress.

## THE PARISH OF ST LUKE'S



The Parish of St Luke's, Reigate was originally within the Diocese of Winchester, and it was the Bishop of Winchester, Samuel Wilberforce (son of William Wilberforce, the anti slave trade campaigner), who consecrated the original Church in 1871.

By 1882, the Parish of St Luke's, Reigate had transferred to the Diocese of Rochester, so the new building works were dedicated by Anthony Thorold, the Bishop of Rochester.



In 1905 the Parish was transferred again, this time to the newly formed Diocese of Southwark, of which it remains part of to this day.





The original vicarage for St Luke's stood next to the South Park Constitutional Club and with its garden encompassed all the land between Park Lane East, Sandcross Lane and North Road. This large building with its enormous chimneys remained the vicarage until May 1954 when the land was sold for housing and a house next to the

church building was purchased as a replacement vicarage. The Church Road vicarage was sold in 2016 and a new vicarage purchased behind the Beehive Pub.

### **ST LUKE'S PARISH HALL**

In 1899 White Hall Farm, which was situated opposite the then vicarage on Sandcross Lane, was sold off for housing. The farm's old barn, on the corner of Sandcross Lane and New North Road, was purchased by the



church. The barn was demolished and in 1908 St Luke's Parish Hall was erected, funded by public subscription.

After nearly 90 years, in 1996 the Parish Hall was sold and is now used as a Nursery school.

### **CHURCH ACCESS**

The main entrance to the Church has always been accessed from the side path leading from Church Road. This is because churches are traditionally aligned so that when you enter and take your seat you are facing east. The 1882 entrance was on the northwest corner and, although the porch is long gone, traces of the doorway can still be seen today in the new foyer.

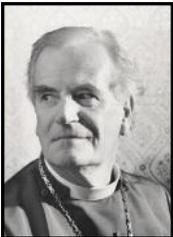
In the early days of St Luke's, many parishioners would walk up a small path which ran between two houses on Priory Road, although no records exist as to when the house owners stopped access across their land. In 1941 however, Mr Stobbs gave the Church a strip of land from his property adjoining the Church so that there might once again be a pathway from Priory Road up to the Church.

## BUILDING DEVELOPMENT

The only incidence in which St Luke's Church suffered damage during the Battle of Britain was a machine-gunning of the roof. It took the gales in the 1960s to cause any significant damage to the Church.

The west end of the Church had never been properly completed. This created a problem as it was exposed to the prevailing winds and rain. The original west end structure of lath and plaster with tiles to the exterior was not adequate and was blown in during gales in the 1960s. (How dark the Church must have been when it was lit only by gas lamps until electric lighting was installed in 1946).

In 1969 the damaged west wall was replaced by a highly glazed elevation which let in much more light. The funding for it came from the sale of the Mission Hall in Park Lane East (now the Chantry) where Sunday School and Women's meetings had been held. An entrance foyer, small room and toilets were also added at the same time as the new west elevation.



The West End alterations were dedicated by Mervyn Stockwood, the Bishop of Southwark, in 1969.

Whilst the glass let in a vast amount of light, it also caused problems for afternoon or early evening services. In certain months the sunlight was so bright and strong that the vicar could hardly see and the congregation were nicely roasted on the backs of their heads!

The prevailing winds and rain continued to be a challenge to the wooden window, and major repairs were required after a storm in 2007. With the large west window nearing the end of its life and more space urgently required, a new Annex was proposed and subsequently built. With a new entrance, two large meeting rooms, improved toilets and a new kitchen, the church has gained a fantastic addition to the building and hopefully the west wall problem has been solved for the next 100 years.





Jonathan Clark, the Bishop of Croydon, opened and dedicated the Annex in 2015. The outward mission of the church was confirmed when the first users of the Annex were the Winter Night Shelter offering somewhere

warm for the homeless in the area to sleep.



About 50% of the funding for the new annex came from the sale of Church property, the majority from the sale of St Peter's Church in Dovers Green.



St Peter's Church was built in 1956 within the new Dovers Green Estate, as a daughter church to St Luke's. It served the people in Dovers Green until 2008 when it was sold to a Nursery school as by then the building required major refurbishment which was too costly for the Parish. Without the sale of St Peter's it is unlikely that

the parish would have been able to build the new annex. In recognition of this, the main downstairs room in the annex has been named the "St Peter's Room".

As well as structural changes to our buildings, many internal alterations and changes have been made over the years:

For many years the church was fitted with pine pews throughout. In the 1950s, a bequest was left and the pine pews to either side of the centre aisle were replaced with oak pews. Early in the new millennium, as the church no longer had a hall or other buildings, it was decided to remove most of the pews to allow the church to be used as a multi-purpose space. Timber from the oak pews was used to make a new lectern, portable communion table and book stand.



In more recent years the sung worship at St Luke's has changed from a more traditional style with a robed choir to an evangelical and charismatic style led by a music group. In 2015, it was decided to remove the oak choir stalls which were installed in



1905. This allowed the chancel to be opened up to provide a large open space at the front of the Church for leading worship in its current style.



The front of the chancel has also seen many changes over time. The Communion Table is a replica of one in St John's Church in Ephesus, reputed to be the oldest Christian Church in the world. It is made of walnut with five inlaid olive crosses. This type of altar table is intended to be used without a frontal cloth.



Originally behind the communion table were slate tablets inscribed with the ten commandments but these were removed in 1906 when Lady Henry Somerset presented a new reredos to the church. The reredos was largely the work of her own hands with help and advice from Mrs Watts, the wife of the celebrated Surrey artist, George Watts.



The reredos was originally intended for one of the chapels in Hereford Cathedral. The cathedral of the diocese in which Eastnor Castle stands and the family seat which she inherited on the death of her father but later handed over to a cousin.

Isabel Caroline Somers Cocks was the daughter of the 3rd Earl of Somers and lived much of her life at Reigate Priory often attending church at St Luke's. In 1872 a shy 20 year old Isabel married Lord Henry Somerset. Unfortunately it would turn out to be an unhappy marriage and after a few years Isabel continued to live at Reigate Priory with her son while her husband lived in Italy.



Lady Somerset was a prolific speaker and social reformer, especially in the temperance movement. She lobbied governments and politicians from all parties, addressed huge rallies and even went down the pits to talk to miners about God's love for them. Words were not enough for her though and she was passionate about action which made a real difference to the lives of real people. In 1895

she set up the Colony for Women Inebriates at Duxhurst, just south of Reigate, which was a model village intended to rehabilitate alcoholics.

In 1913, the readers of London Evening News voted Lady Henry as the woman they would most like as the first female prime minister of the United Kingdom.

### **INSIDE THE CHURCH**

The pipe organ was presented by a Church warden in 1891 and was originally powered by hand-pumping the bellows. Hydraulic power was installed later in 1928. The organ is currently inoperative and an electric one is used when required. As part of the Annex build and church refurbishment the PCC agreed to keep the pipe organ and in time investigate the cost of repair and restoration.



The Lady Chapel, to the south side of the chancel, had originally provided an area of reserved seating for the occupants and visitors to



Reigate Priory. Lady Katherine Somerset was the wife of Lady Henry's only son and they also made their home for many years at Reigate Priory and, with their three sons, worshipped at St Luke's church.

In 1921, the reserved seating was converted into a memorial chapel to those that died in the First World War. The names of the church members who died in the war are inscribed on an oak tablet.

A fuller list of all those from South Park who died in the World War is inscribed on the War Memorial situated on Church Road opposite the Church.



Within the memorial chapel is an altar table and reredos which were given by Mr Mitchell in memory of his son, who died on the S.S. Arcadia when it was torpedoed in 1917. The Reredos was made by the Potters Art Guild of Compton under the supervision of Mrs Watts. It is made from a unique clay found in that area of Surrey which was coloured in a special manner adopted by the Guild.

For such a small chapel the Reredos and table situated on a raised platform are very large and dominate the chapel's space. When it was erected in 1921, a large window behind it was blocked up on the inside making the chapel quite dark. The reredos has now been lowered from its elevated position which has allowed the window behind it to be re-opened, flooding the chapel with more natural light.



The vestry door panels were painted by Miss Collier in 1908 with scenes depicting sick people on one side, the same people on the other side now healed, with our Lord the healer in the middle and St Luke beside him.

The reason for filling in the panels was because a great part of the North aisle is out of sight of the Altar, and it was felt a substitution of pictures in place of the bare pitch-pine would add colour and design to that part of the church, providing a devotional object for the eye to rest upon, so affording an outward aid to the worship of those sitting there.



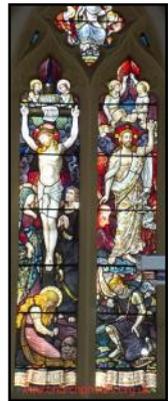
The font (for many years in the south west corner of the church) has been returned close to its original position. It was originally paid for by 221 of the children that attended the Sunday school in 1870. In its new position, it is easier to use within the main services as its previous location made it difficult for the congregation to see it in use.

## WINDOWS

The church building has some beautiful stained glass windows. The six Lancet windows in the Chancel were placed there as a memorial to the Rev. William Hillis, the second vicar of St Luke's, who had moved from St Phillips Reigate in 1877.

The Chancel windows illustrate (from left to right)

- The Annunciation
- The Visit of the Magi
- The Cross
- The Resurrection
- Jesus' Baptism
- Jesus' Temptation



In the South Aisle the first stained glass window shows Mary meeting Jesus after the resurrection. The window was given in memory of Rev.Arthur H.Murray, who was the fourth vicar of St Luke's, from 1890 to 1897 and who died whilst vicar in 1897 at the early age of 40.



Another window of particular mention is also on the South Aisle and given in memory of a parishioner in 1945. The window represents on the left subjects of the first chapters of St Luke's Gospel, and on the right St Luke seated and writing his Gospel.

In the Memorial Chapel, there is a small stained glass window given in memory of a choir boy. The inscription reads:

*"In memory of Edward Hewett who died on Good Friday 14 April 1876 aged 17. Inserted by his fellow Choristers and the Incumbent and Organist"*



## ST LUKE'S TODAY

In 1871 when it was formed the Parish had a population of 850 people which was rapidly expected to rise to 1000. Since that time there have been many changes to the area. Most of the farmland in the Parish has now become housing and of the numerous shops in South Park only one store remains - although the Woodhatch area of the Parish has a good number of local shops. The 2011 census showed that the Parish now has around 3000 homes with a population of almost 7500.

As previously mentioned the church buildings have been altered considerably over the last 150 years. We now have a very open, airy and bright building with meeting rooms, a kitchen and toilets, all things not included in the original build of 1871.

With the passing of the years and changes in the patterns of worship, we find ourselves today no longer so dependent on ecclesiastical architecture. Indeed, we may hardly cast a glance at what surrounds us. Yet our Church building remains to remind us of the worshippers we succeed.

The building stands as an offering to God and a silent and inspiring background to our modern prayers and praises.



## VICARS OF ST LUKE'S CHURCH

|             |                    |
|-------------|--------------------|
| 1871 - 1877 | John Wright        |
| 1877 - 1885 | William Hillis     |
| 1885 - 1890 | Malcolm Baynes     |
| 1890 - 1897 | Arthur Murray      |
| 1897 - 1900 | Ernest Mort        |
| 1900 - 1909 | Edward Rhys-Jones  |
| 1909 - 1914 | P.W.Shepherd Smith |
| 1914 - 1951 | Walter Godwin      |
| 1951 - 1959 | Arnold Turner      |
| 1959 - 1965 | Frederick Serjeant |
| 1965 - 1985 | Ilex Pullenayegum  |
| 1985 - 2000 | Alan Mayer         |
| 2001 - 2009 | Mike Fox           |
| 2010 -      | Anita Colpus       |

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**ST LUKE'S  
CHURCH.  
LIFE  
MATTERS.**