

## Holy Trinity Church: Parish Halls and the Trinity Centre

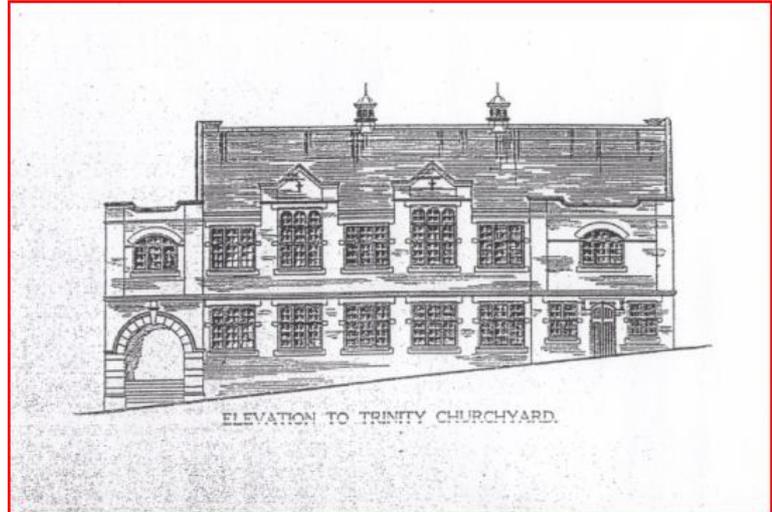
Before the Reformation, many parishes had a church house, maintained by the church wardens for festivities such as parish ales. Lack of written evidence or later medieval town plans means that we do not know whether Holy Trinity or St Mary's had such a place. After the tower of Holy Trinity fell in 1740, destroying most of the church, meetings are recorded as taking place in the Weston chapel or in St Mary's. But by the nineteenth century Parish Rooms (see below) had been acquired occupying part of the site of the subsequent Parish Halls, now the Trinity Centre.



*The old Parish Rooms and adjacent cottages in the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century*

Here groups like the Slate Club and the Temperance Society met but there was little space for theatricals, lectures or parties. Though halls in the town were used, members of the parish wished for larger premises, close to the church. William Wells, parishioner, property developer, local benefactor and donor of the Holy Trinity chancel screen, bought the adjacent cottage and another cottage was acquired (see photograph above). The old rooms and these cottages were demolished to create the site for the new halls.

Eric Langridge Lunn, architect and parishioner, designed the new building as shown here in the original architectural drawing of the front elevation. The challenge presented by sloping ground led to the provision of two entrances: a Lower Main Entrance and Upper Entrance, now the position of the Parish Office. The Foundation Stone was laid on 14 October 1909 and can be seen embedded in the wall opposite the Clergy Vestry of the church.



The inauguration of the new Parish Halls took place on 13 April 1910, a showery day. Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, Queen Victoria's third daughter, drove by motor car from Windsor to perform the grand opening ceremony.



*Princess Christian arrives to perform the opening ceremony  
(This photograph is produced by kind permission of the Guildford Institute)*

The Bishop of Guildford conducted a brief dedication service in the large (upstairs) hall. In his address the Rector said that 'the work of the Church nowadays was not confined to the House of God', expressing the hope that "the building would prove useful not only to the parish but also to the Diocese, the County and the Town."

At the time of the opening The Surrey Advertiser published a description of 'The New Hall':

"The hall is a [light], airy and spacious building and will meet a long-felt want in the parish. It is constructed of red brick, with Bath Stone dressings, and the main entrance is opposite the cancel of the church. Owing to the limitations of the site, and the fact that the steep gradient rendered two levels necessary on the ground floor, the main hall is on the upper floor. Beneath are several rooms. One [...] will accommodate 80 persons [with]..... folding doors [...creating two] room[s] of the same [smaller] size. On the upper part of the ground floor are two small rooms, also [created] by folding doors, which are to be used as committee rooms, or dressing rooms in connection with entertainments [upstairs]. These, when thrown into one, will hold 30 persons. The main staircase is fireproof, and the emblems of Holy Trinity and St. Mary are represented in the [arched] window in coloured glass. The large hall is an excellent apartment, seventy feet long by 26ft. 6in. wide it will accommodate, including the platform, 260 people seated. The walls are of red brickwork, with oak timber roof, stained dull green colour, and there is a dado of plain oak boarding. The floor is of concrete with surface covering of boards. The platform can be easily extended, and there is an emergency staircase by the side, by which the dressing rooms are reached. [.....] [Tables and chairs for the platform were] made from oak beams taken from the old building. [...] The building is lighted by incandescent gas, and heated by low pressure hot water radiators. All the work has been done by local labour, and the 400 chairs in the hall and fittings are of English manufacture. There is a basement with boiler and copper, and a service lift has been provided. The ventilation is on the most up-to-date lines."

In the early days, and with a caretaker resident in what is now 6 Trinity Churchyard, pantomimes, concerts, harvest suppers, lectures and such events as teas for service men during World War I all took place in the halls. Holy Trinity was the pro- Cathedral of the Diocese of Guildford between 1927 and 1961 hosting a number of ceremonies, such as ordinations. During World War II it would appear that the basement was commandeered as an official air raid shelter in the care of the Office of Works. Reproduced below is the programme for an "Entertainment" given by the children, and some adults, of Holy Trinity and St. Mary's School in December 1912. Remembering that this would have been in an era before even the 'wireless' and certainly television, the programme is typical of the type of local evening entertainment common at the time. [The hand bill is reproduced by permission of the Surrey History Centre, Woking: <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/recreation-heritage-and-culture/archives-and-history/surrey-history-centre>]

**Holy Trinity and S. Mary's School, Guildford.**

**ENTERTAINMENT**

IN THE PARISH HALL, HOLY TRINITY CHURCHYARD,  
on Tuesday, December 10th, 1912, at 8 p.m.

<p style="text-align: center;">→* PART I. *←</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FLAG DRILL ... .. <i>Boys of the Junior School.</i></li> <li>2. RECITATION "Red Riding Hood" <i>Winnie Batten.</i></li> <li>3. OLD ENGLISH SONGS ... .. <i>Senior Class.</i>                  (a) "It was a lover and his lass"                  (b) "Cherry Ripe" ... ..</li> <li>4. DANCE... .. "Hornpipe" ... .. <i>Class iii.</i></li> <li>5. RECITATION "Which shall it be?" <i>Dorothy Smith.</i></li> <li>6. DANCE ... .. "Irish Jig" ... .. <i>Class iii.</i></li> <li>7. RECITATION "A Boy's Pocket" <i>Albert Hammond.</i></li> <li>8. SCOTCH SONGS... .. <i>Class iv. and v.</i>                  AND                  HIGHLAND FLING... <i>Evelyn Tubbs, Elsie Smithers.</i></li> <li>9. DIALOGUE "Chattering Carrie" ... ..                  <i>D. Martin, F. Martin, E. Williams, Ivy Parker.</i></li> <li>10. FAN SONG ... .. <i>Senior Girls.</i></li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">→* PART II. *←</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PIANOFORTE SOLO ... .. <i>Miss JOHNSON.</i></li> <li>2. VOCAL QUARTETTE "Strange Adventure" <i>Sullivan.</i>                  (The Yeomen of the Guard).                  <i>Mr. H. BOUGHTON. Mr. W. H. FOSTER.</i>                  <i>Mr. W. G. FORD. VERNON MILES.</i></li> <li>3. SONG ... .. <i>The Rev. H. P. B. CHUBB.</i></li> <li>4. VOCAL TRIO... "Jack and Jill" ... .. <i>Jarvis.</i>                  <i>Mr. H. BOUGHTON. Mr. W. G. FORD.</i>                  <i>Mr. W. H. FOSTER.</i></li> <li>5. SONG ... .. <i>Mrs. MORGAN.</i></li> <li>6. SONG ... .. <i>The Rev. H. P. B. CHUBB.</i></li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GOD SAVE THE KING.</b></p>
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Over the ensuing years of the twentieth century the halls continued to be used for a wide variety of activities. Requirements changed and wear and tear took its course. In 1932, it had been deemed necessary to insert an additional staircase as a fire escape from the Upper Hall. This reduced the size of one of the small committee rooms downstairs as referred to in the description above. The remainder of this room later became the site of a much larger space devoted to ladies toilets than had been allocated initially. Later still the ladies had to give part of their space to the gentlemen when the original gentlemen's toilet became 'inadequate' and subject to damp (1989). The other committee room gradually became a kitchen, but developed piecemeal over many years. In the 1960s the local sanitary inspector advised that running water and a sink, with proper drainage, be installed. Presumably water was still drawn in the basement and sent up in the service lift at that time. There are a number of comments in the archive papers suggesting that the parish was always reluctant to spend money on such niceties as plumbing, safe water heaters and appliances, or even closed cupboards in which to keep crockery hygienically. Only in 1981 was the remaining gas lighting in the building removed. At the same time the Lower Hall was enlarged by the removal of part of a corridor on the north and east sides. It was following these alterations that the Upper Hall was let to 'Dance World' on a long lease that secured a steady income for the parish for the next 25 years or so, but filled some parishioners with nostalgia for past social gatherings.

By early this century the needs of the parish had changed again. Refurbishment and rearrangement of the accommodation more suited to the times was necessary. A sizeable legacy, left by a member of the congregation in 2005, came at an opportune moment enabling such work to take place. This was accomplished fully on the lower floor including the installation of a modern kitchen and the incorporation of the Parish Office into the building. A lift was installed to allow disabled access to the upper floor which underwent some partial refurbishment and rearrangement, including the removal of the platform. Visitors to the upper hall will see that the red bricks and oak dado (referred to above) were at some time painted over in white and, during the occupancy of 'Dance World', the lofty oak timber roof was hidden behind a false ceiling to reduce heat loss and allow improved lighting. For the moment but in need of repair, the original ventilation lanterns remain on the outside. The new 'Trinity Centre', as the halls are now called, was opened in the Spring of 2008. The final phase of internal work in the Upper Hall and adjoining spaces took place during 2009 in time for the 100th anniversary of the building in 2010.



In a small meeting room on the ground floor now hangs the banner of St. George, worked for the Temperance Society in 1902. The banner was recently refurbished by volunteer needlewomen from the local branch of NADFAS and is a reminder that meetings of the society took place in the Parish Halls a century ago.

The Parish Magazine of May 1910 contains a full list of proposed charges for all the rooms. Interestingly charges were set out as either for 'Parochial' or 'Non-Parochial' use and in both cases differed as to the whether the purpose of the use was Social or Religious. Non-Parochial Social use was charged at the highest rate and Parochial Religious use at the lowest. Since all use was chargeable it has to be deduced that all parish organizations and groups paid for their time which is certainly not the case today! But in the words spoken by the Rector at the opening ceremony in 1910, the Trinity Centre continues to be "useful...to the parish.....and the town" now generating an income for the benefit of the parish and its wider commitments.



*The front of the Trinity Centre showing the new entrance to the Parish Office (white door) and the main entrance (glass door) slightly further to the left in the centre of the picture.*