

WHERE THE CHALK MEETS THE CLAY

A brief and at times inaccurate survey of the history of the Church
at Carshalton and Carshalton Beeches

by
Martin Booth

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Martin Booth
Carshalton Beeches
June 2006

Where the Chalk meets the Clay

Martin Booth

Let me tell you about a holy man called Christopher. Christopher, although you wouldn't think it to look at him, is over three thousand years old. He may not always have been called Christopher, mind you – he may have been called Gault or Serlo, William or Edmund, Basil or Gordon but we shall call him Christopher throughout.

All around here thirty centuries ago was probably downland. Rough grass, bracken, gorse, furze... It rolled up away from the great plain, which was in turn surrounded by a bowl of ridges, where the swelling river looped round the two low humps of land that was to become London. Just here, where the chalk met the London clay basin, springs started from the hillside. These springs begat fertile farming settlements. One such settlement was so old that by the eleventh century it was already known as *Aultone* – the Old Town. And, either because it had a cross roads, or at one time had sported a great Christian cross, or perhaps because of the watercress beds that had been fed by the spring pools at the foot of the downland, it became known eventually as *Cresaultone*.

Behind us, on the great ridge that runs half the breadth of southern England, a short morning's walk distant, began the great forest - the Saxon word for which is weald. Bear and wolf and wild boar roamed this dark place. Folk could walk five days eastward or five days westward and never emerge from under the dense tree canopy. The great wood spread away down south until it dipped its roots in the sea.

The people of Christopher's settlement saw him as a holy man, seemingly in touch with other things beyond hunting and feasting and keeping warm. In exchange for a roof over his head and a plot of land to work for himself and the occasional square meal, Christopher would call down blessings on the old and the young, the to-be-married and the infirm. In the depth of winter and in their darkest days, he would plead on the peoples' behalf for the light to come, the seeds to spring forth, or the harvest to be hale.

Thus the seasons came and went, came and went, until, one day, many years later, the peace of the settlement was disturbed by a band of men curiously but purposefully dressed. Sandals and rough leggings, tunics and leather breastplates. Short stabbing swords swung at their hips and on their heads, or slung by their chinstraps from their spears, were helmets. They would stay for four hundred years and many of Christopher's people would adopt their ways, including building great villas with heated mosaic floors. And Christopher's people began to require him to minister to them in the traditions of the gods these men had brought with them. Gods for battles, gods for hunting and even gods to sit beside the ancient springs. Invisible, sometimes mischievous gods that, in later tales would become fairies or elves or sprites.

Then came a new God. Or, rather, news of an extraordinary event that had taken place beyond distant hills in the east. The news said that there were not many gods, but just one God. And he had sent his son so we could understand a little more clearly what he was really like. But because this son had not shown the people the god of their imaginations, they had killed him. Which says nothing about God and everything about our imaginations. Yet, wonder of wonders, because the true God was the true God, the son had risen to life again and had afterwards ascended to be with his Father in heaven.

And his followers had then spread throughout the known world to bring this news to all nations.

Christopher, who had always been in touch with such matters, had been one of the first to offer himself up to be baptised in the spring waters of the old settlement and embrace this truth. And the people in the great villa down the track made their home available to all so that everyone who chose could follow the Son of God. They had a pool by the door, fed by one of the springs, where people could be baptised and renewed in the new way. They had a great courtyard, where everyone could stand and hear the teaching that followers of the way were invited to bring to them. And they had a table in the *reclinium*, the private area, where the great love-feast – the sharing of the holy meal, in remembrance of the Son of God, could be shared.

By now the old armies had left and new folk had arrived and settled – to benefit from the milder climate, the longer summers and extended harvest times. They had come from Saxony and Anglia and Jutland. And they brought their own language. In new East Anglia were the Northfolk and the Southfolk. There were the Middle Saxons and the East Saxons, the South Saxons and the West Saxons. And here, dwelt the folk of the *Suth-Rea* - the Southern Kingdom, or, perhaps, the people South of the *Rea*, the great river. And the place Christopher and the community built, in which to talk about the good history or news - in this language the *godspel* - was called *cirice*. And Christopher was called the *preost* whilst the area leaders were known as *biscop'*, who administered to their *biscoprics*. And those who did not believe were known as *hæðen*.

All this time Christ's Holy Spirit had been at work in another part of the country. Some years earlier a young Romano-British man of high birth had been captured by Irish raiders and held slave. Eventually he escaped and made his way to a monastery in France to study. At length he went back to Ireland to preach Christ to the people who had once held him captive. His name was Patrick. Some generations later another young man, Columba, inspired by Patrick left Ireland and set himself adrift in a little coracle – leaving where he ended up in God's hands. He arrived at a little island on the western fringes of the Scots mainland called Iona. This, in Hebrew means Dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, just as Columba, too means Dove in Latin. Columba's work also bore fruit and soon the way that he and people like him lived and worshipped Christ bore fruit and spread throughout the whole region of Northern Britain, reaching places like Whitby and Lindisfarne. This was what was to become known as Celtic Christianity.

Shortly after, the great Pope Gregory - who had given the world a way of singing psalms which eventually formed the basis for what we now know as choral works and hymns - sent an envoy to Britain. This envoy, a monk called Augustine (after the legendary Church Father), landed at Thanet in Kent and sought to teach the people another way of following Christ. Soon there came a dispute over which way was best to follow Christ: the Celtic or the Roman way? The argument centred on the dating of Easter and was settled by debate at Whitby. The Roman Church – skilled as it was in reasoned argument as developed by that first Augustine (of Hippo), learned from the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, won the day. We still measure the passing of the seasons by this method even now. The date of the Easter we are about to celebrate was, to all intents and purposes, arrived at thirteen centuries ago.

In fact much of the shape of our Church calendar, our liturgy and even how our churches' furniture is arranged is derived from monastic traditions, brought to these

shores by monks such as Augustine. For example, a choir and their seats are there because the monks arranged themselves to praise God in just this way. We start a festival on the evening of the day before because the monks started their festivals this way: Christmas Eve being the most obvious example. And even our clergy still wear monastic style robes – if you look closely at Christopher of a Sunday, you may very well at some point spot what looks like a habit. And I'm not talking about his love for chocolate.

This new religion grew. Leaders became appointed in the way they had been appointed in the East – by the laying-on of hands. An action descended from the very disciples of the Son of God. As the villas became too small to hold all the people who wanted to hear the good news, other places sprung up called Minsters. The first in Surrey was at Chertsey in the mid seventh century. There was probably one at Croydon. *Crogdæn* or *Croindene*, born as it was in the crooked (*crog*) valley (*dene*) that runs up from Godstone. And these Minsters were staffed by canons – lay religious men (not monks) who lived together in community and ventured out to preach and teach. People attached to a major ecclesiastical building such as a cathedral, or the Minster in the West of London, are still called canons today.

Between the ninth and eleventh centuries, the larger jurisdictional and economic communities, which the Minsters served, began to break up into independent manors and villages. The people of these villages wanted their own local churches. Their lords provided these churches and appointed men to serve them. And Christopher became one such servant of the Way, appointed with the same laying-on of hands that reached all the way back both in time and space to Christ and his disciples. So Christopher and the people he served, like those of other settlements, built a place where he could minister to them at the very heart of their own community. Stone upon stone. And thus the parish church of Carshalton was founded.

Then came the great warrior folk from across the North Sea. Fierce and dangerous men, worshipping the ancient warlike gods. And all those followers of the *Christe* were subjected to persecution and suffering and death at the hands of these Norsemen, these Vikings.

They were dark days indeed. Some folk asked Christopher where the God whom he preached had gone? Was he not powerful? Could he not drive the *hæðen* away? Why were they winning? And Christopher could only refer them to the *halig boc*; to show them how such things had happened before and would doubtless happen again. But, like those in ancient times had done, they needed simply to continue to watch, to wait and to pray. Perhaps, one day, God would reveal his purpose.

And one day God did. The rule of the North Sea warriors had, like the Wandle breaking its banks and flooding the watermeadow, flooded the land. They had even occupied London. Soon there was just one little island down among the West Saxons land, Wessex, remaining defiant. There, a king, Alfred, regrouped and waited his chance. Alfred was a Christian king who prayed, like Christopher, for aid. But, unlike Christopher, Alfred had an army.

Eventually came the day when Alfred confronted the heathen horde and drove them back beyond the river the Romans had called *Thamesis*. Here the people from the North Sea remained for many hundreds of years, giving settlements names ending in 'by' and 'wick' - meaning farm, village or town – Derby, Rugby... Warwick, Chiswick.

And their streets were called *gatan* or, as we call them today, 'gate'. Ludgate, Highgate, Moorgate.

Meanwhile, Alfred had noted that peoples' knowledge of Christ had understandably waned under the heathen onslaught. So he commanded books to be written and circulated so that folk could receive light and truth and not sit alone, afraid in the darkness. Like Elijah in the cave, though, Alfred discovered he was not alone. It was true similar darkness had spread across the whole Christian west. However, through the followers of the great theologian Augustine of Hippo, or monks like those who lived under the Rule of Benedict of Nursia (Benedictines), the thin little flame of faith had been kept from extinction. Writing, preserved in resilient little monasteries and through the commands of Christian leaders such as Alfred and Charles the Great (Charlemagne), soon started to spread the good news all over Europe again.

For Christopher and the people he served, though, a period of unrest followed. Anglo-Saxon and Dane, Catholic and pagan lived side-by-side uncomfortably. Eventually the land was united under three kings in particular. Aethelstan, the Scandinavian Cnut, and finally Edward. This last, a pious man, known as the Confessor, gained the crown because his mother Emma, a Norman by birth, had married both Aethelstan and, when he died, Cnut. Now there's a story for another time.

Edward, however, died without an heir. And, so, one autumn, Christopher – just returning from visiting a sick child – happened to glance towards the gently undulating downs to the east of the village. His gaze was greeted by an astonishing sight. A mighty army – horsemen, bowmen, men-at-arms and fluttering banners had begun to settle on the flank of the hills overlooking his village.

On the high ground, with a clear view across to London, and yet with watering in the spring-pools for the horses, the visit was perhaps not unexpected. Christopher had heard the Norman Duke William had overcome the recently crowned king Harold on a ridge just north of Pevensey at a battlefield forever after called *senlac* in the French tongue. Bloodlake.

William, by reputation a warrior, but by nature also an abbey-builder and church reformer was on his way to London to receive the crown he had won in the holy trial-by-ordeal of battle. Waiting his chance he had flung a wing of his army up to Southwark to check the lie of the land and was now circling south of the Thames, bringing his army round to eventually cross the Thames at Wallingford – to ultimately receive London – and England's – surrender at Berkhamstead*.

In the years to come William and his sons and grandsons would build many more churches and abbeys. Where now there were dozens of monasteries and churches, soon there would be hundreds. But William brought something else, too. A new way of organising the Church and a new way of thinking about Church. Under great archbishops like Lanfranc and Anselm, the Church in England would become more

* There is no record of William having ever made camp on the flanks overlooking Carshalton. However, some historians suggest he came this way. See, for example: Turner G 'William the Conqueror's March to London in 1066' in *The English Historical Review*, Vol 27 No. 106 (April 1912) pp209-225. It is not unreasonable to consider that he may have kept his army a morning's march from the Thames – a safe distance – whilst throwing a wing up to Southwark to reconnoitre London; see how the political and military land lay. The waters all along the base of the ridge at Carshalton would have been ideal for his men and horses, whilst the downland above a perfect place to sit and contemplate the great city and his next move. But there is no local tradition to ever say this really happened.

systematic and organised. Archdeacons and rural deans would develop an administrative role and the Church in England would start to understand itself better; become more theologically adept.

It was a new Roman way the Normans brought. In this, priests were not allowed to marry, not allowed to inherit benefices, not allowed to hold more than one 'Living' as it was called. A living derived from the land priests had traditionally held since before Christianity and from the system known as tithing. But, even so, with these reforms, the whole system in the wrong hands was open to abuse.

The king, meanwhile, would only be allowed to appoint bishops through the Pope's agreement. This last rule, it has to be said, was not always rigorously adhered to. Let's put it this way - if a king recommended a loyal courtier to be a bishop, the Pope tended to agree. This came a little unstuck a few years later when Henry II recommended his right hand man Thomas Becket to become Archbishop of Canterbury - and thereby control, he thought, both church and state.

Thomas, born in London and schooled at Merton Priory just up the road from here, despite his friendship with Henry, took his new role seriously. Believing himself thoroughly to have been called by God, he started to refuse Henry's requests, in order to preserve the independence of the Church. Well, one thing led to another and we know the rest. Thomas was murdered in front of one of the altars at Canterbury and the great pilgrimages in honour of the holy martyr began. Over the centuries tens of thousands walked the path just beyond us a little higher up along the North Downs. The great prehistoric trackway through the vast wild forest, along the ridge that ran from the coast near Winchester all the way to the Cathedral Church of Christ at Canterbury.

By the way, as a little aside, the world renowned Merton Priory once owned lands here in Carshalton and, indeed, the church belonged to it. It was given in the 12c by its then patron Faramusus of Bologna (not a local, obviously), and kept until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538. Merton kept some of its sheep around on these pleasant slopes and would drive them to and fro along the lane known then, naturally enough, as Sheephouse Lane. But which, to us, is now known as Green Wrythe Lane.

Technically the owner of the Church and its lands was known as a rector. Merton Abbey was the rector for those three hundred years. Sometimes the rector was a lay person - like the lord of the manor. Increasingly as the centuries wore on, the rector was the parish priest himself. Then there was someone called the advowson, who was the person with the right to appoint the rector. Again, this could be a lord of the manor, the bishop or another clergyman - depending on who 'owned' the rights to the parish at the time.

But we are running a little ahead of ourselves. Back in the early days of Norman England, Christopher and his village had begun a new church in the modern Romanesque style. Clever new ways of vaulting ceilings and arching windows had been brought from Normandy. It was a splendid building in which to hold services. Organised and confident, Christopher and his church went from strength to strength - and with this new-found security came wealth and power. As we have seen, sometimes this was in direct opposition to the secular lords. Christopher became a very important figure in the village and in the surrounding area, too. The knights who owned the estates in the district found they needed to consult Christopher as almost an equal. People like the Fiennes (as in Sir Ranulph and Ralph... I wonder if they are any relation?). People like the Colevilles, the Tregozes and The De Besevilles. And, along

the lanes to the east in Wallington and Beddington, people like the de Watevilles, the Carews and Lanfranc's biographer, amongst other things, Milo Crispin.

In fact, such relationships had developed on the national and international scale, too. The successive Popes in Rome meanwhile had begun to cherish their wealth and power. It enabled them, they felt, to continue God's all-important work to Christianise the known world. It enabled them to send Crusaders to the Middle East, to subdue uppity kings and Holy Roman Emperors closer to home.

To keep the reins of power of their vast and ever-growing territories, the Popes would appoint trusted servants, living in and around Rome, as Archdeacons and other ministers, to benefices and livings in England. Even if these appointees never actually set foot in the land.

The money rolled in. Sometimes, if the Popes had a quarrel with the English kings, they would use that revenue to fund French and Spanish wars against the English. This, understandably, would irritate the English King and his Court.

On a local level, the absenteeism of middle-ranking Church officers became something of an irritation to people like Christopher's villagers. They were settled, moderately successful and dutifully paid their tithes. But nothing seemed to happen directly to the money. It drained out of the parish and straight to Rome. At the same time there were rumours of schisms - divisions in interpretation of Church doctrine and Church law. And there were anti-popes who claimed the right to the throne of St Peter in Rome. Soon no-one could argue successfully which was the 'real pope'. If there could be two Popes, though, why not three or ten or a hundred? What happened to the Pope's singular authority in that eventuality?

And then, for those of you who know your Chaucer, there were the Summoners and the Pardoners. The Archdeacons, being absent, needed someone to make sure the tithes were being collected. Summoners, not ordained or anointed, just petty officials - debt-collectors if you like - would drag the villagers to court on a rumour that they had not paid their dues. Pardoners, for their part, again neither ordained nor anointed, offered people eternal salvation, if they'd only be willing to pay the price and be willing to receive a little slip of paper saying so. This little slip of paper becoming known as an Indulgence.

Chaucer was, it has to be said - and notably - far more sympathetic towards the poor parson in his writing. Christopher, for his part, had started to learn more about his own role and how to explore the growth in his own and others' understanding of the bible. Although, being as he was then, a good Roman Catholic, he did not approve of the highly-illegal version of the bible being circulated. This was written not in Latin but in everyday English and circulated by the followers of one master Wyclif.

Christopher was happy to encourage what was to be called by historians 'the discovery of the individual'. If you like: a humanist approach - helping his parishioners relate more personally with the great truths found in scripture and in their wider social environment. Great scholars like Anselm, Abelard and Aquinas had passed their knowledge in these and other areas down through

- Priors like Merton;
- Cathedrals like Christopher's diocesan one at Winchester (this whole area belonging as it did in earlier times to Wessex);

- and new learning-places for all ('universities' people called them) developed along the lines of those founded at Bologna, Paris and Oxford.

But Christopher would not countenance the heretical notion that everyone should be able to read the Word of God for themselves. They'd only go and interpret it all wrong and find themselves lost to the devil forever. The thought that eventually everyone would have a bible in a language they understood, set right in front of them in church would have been, to Christopher in those days, absolutely horrendous. Poor people. Set adrift in boats of their own imaginations with no-one especially trained to guide them.

Eventually matters came to a head over in Europe where a thirty-ish year old Augustinian theologian, unable to reconcile himself to the fact that he could never find a way of being reconciled to God, seemingly because of all the rules and pitfalls laid down by Church over the centuries, started to question what he had been dogmatically taught. His name was Martin Luther and he found his answer in St Paul's letter to the Romans, Chapter 1 verse 17. People are reconciled to God, 'justified', by faith alone. It was enough to believe in Christ. Everything else, whilst perhaps important, was secondary to that one great fact.

Although we are damaged, flawed, clumsy, foolish human beings - Luther argued - still we are loved by God and folded in that love through simply following Jesus the Christ - whatever that means to us as individuals. We don't have to be any good at it. We don't have to be any good at anything - not even being human. Thing is, Luther knowing that for himself was one thing. Making it public - as he then did - was quite another.

Well, soon after, the religious world was torn apart. Catholic was set against catholic. And those who chose not to follow Church's teaching in certain areas - who began openly to reject such things as the sale of Indulgences and clergy abuses - were soon called protestants. German princes, brought up in the humanistic teaching and, anyway, not at all happy with the Church's great power in their localities - a power which restricted their own political ambitions - adopted Luther (unwillingly, for the most part, it has to be said) as their figurehead. Luther, never stopped thinking of himself as a Roman Catholic.

And so we had what became known as the Reformation. It should be pointed out at this point that the Roman Catholic Church recognised that much of what Luther and those who followed him suggested were abuses or misinterpretation of doctrine was true. And it reformed itself from within soon afterwards at the council of Trent and, indeed, continues to review its doctrines. The latest major review happening in the 1960s with the Second Vatican Council or Vatican II as it became known.

Over in England, Henry VIII, who had himself been busy persecuting Protestants, convinced the Pope that he should be given the title 'Defender of the Faith' (*Fidelis Defensor, Fid Def, F.D* as seen on our coins even today). He should have quit whilst he was ahead. However, he followed his Fid Def success up by trying to then convince the Pope that he also needed a new wife. This time the Pope wasn't so accommodating, so Henry stormed off and started persecuting Catholics instead. When, still the Pope wouldn't oblige, the King decided that, after all, he was the head of the Church in England and so he got his politicians and theologians to prove that point, just to snub Rome.

As a result Rome excommunicated Henry and everyone who chose to remain associated with him. Trouble is, since that was basically the whole country, on account of Henry being their anointed King, the whole of England was effectively set adrift from Rome. And thus, the Church in England became the Church of England. And, just to prove that he didn't care so there! Henry promptly went off and had all the powerful monasteries in the land - including Merton Priory - dissolved. What that meant, in effect, was that Henry nationalised all the monastic lands - so he and his friends could get all the wealth. He was feeling a bit poor at that time as it happened - what with all those hugely expensive banquets and wars and divorces and so on. And, oh yes, he nicked all the gold, too.

What was Christopher to do? He had always thought of himself as a good Roman Catholic. Had always been obedient to Rome, through his obedience to his bishop. Now he was being asked by that very same bishop to become obedient only to the King. What was he to do? And, what about that villager's granny he buried last week? If he was no longer under the supreme authority of the Pope in Rome, who spoke on behalf of St Peter, who had been given the authority of the Church on earth by Jesus himself...? Well - had that granny been buried unshriven? Was she now wandering, an unforgiven, unblessed, tortured soul, down in the depths of the other place?

Thankfully, the theologians had the answer. All that had ever been done by the priests over the past fifteen hundred years or so was actually the work of the Holy Spirit. Priests were simply the instruments, the conduits, the vessels by which such sacraments were performed. A sacrament being a visible sign of an invisible truth. So God, Christ, the Holy Spirit - the holy trinity - had done, and were still doing their work. They just needed human hands to help ensure it was done in this world.

But, nevertheless, Christopher needed to think this through a whole lot more. So he went off to his diocesan cathedral to study with other priests and learn as much as he could about this whole new way of serving his people. The bishop of Winchester at that time was Stephen Gardiner - a supporter of Henry's position as head of the Church of England, but nevertheless catholic in outlook.

And it was handy that Christopher did take himself off at this moment. Because that gives me the opportunity to read to you a couple of pages from Michael Wilks' talks found in the *Book of Carshalton*. Taking us through the stories of some of the rectors of the church in Carshalton during this turbulent time. These stories are very entertaining and, as you will see, it would be a shame for us to miss out on them. Whereas, to attribute such behaviour as that which you are about to hear to Christopher, might just give you an opinion of him he simply would not deserve...

SOME SIXTEENTH- CENTURY INCUMBENTS*

The Carshalton rectory and its location have changed with the centuries, and there are half a dozen Carshalton houses which have been the homes of rectors. In the sixteenth century the position was even more difficult because there was not only a rector, but a vicar as well - and apparently there was both a rectory and a vicarage (although the latter

* Extract from Chapter Ten of *The Book of Carshalton – The Source of the Wandle*. Copies of the book are available at just £15, from Gordon Rookledge, 15 Beeches Walk, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 4JS. Post & Packing free within the London Borough of Sutton. Tel 020 8241 4404 Fax 020 8770 1957

was probably more like a curate's cottage). The reason for this duplication is that after the Reformation the rectorship and the property going with it were bought and sold like any other property. Thus one could easily have a layman as rector, and he would therefore appoint a cleric as his vicar to take the actual services.

One of the first of these lay rectors was a man called John Fromond or Fromans, who bought Carshalton's rectory in 1556 and lived there until he died in 1580 (when he passed it on to his son). He must have been a fairly rich person, and he had married a lady called Benedicta Draper, the daughter of one of Henry VIII's jewellers, who came from Camberwell. When he bought the rectory he obtained a house and a cottage - probably the Parsonage House and the vicarage, a tithe barn, dovecot, orchard, garden and 270 acres of farmland, presumably out in the common fields. The old Carshalton tithe barn seems to have stood by Margaret's Pool between the end of West Street and Pound Street: probably where the corner of the convent wall stands. So he was a wealthy man; the tithes were paid to him, not the vicar; and he could well afford to appoint a vicar to do the job of being the parish priest. Unfortunately he just seemed incapable of getting on with his vicars - and he went through a whole string of them. In 1568 the vicar complained that Fromond had not been to communion for five years - naturally, he didn't last long. The next vicar complained that Fromond was unable to mend the broken church windows and the following year the vicar complained to the bishop that the rector had failed to repair the chancel. So after several warnings, the bishop excommunicated the rector in 1569. Nevertheless, he survived, but there were further complaints in 1570 about lack of repairs to the church. In 1573 yet another vicar complained that the rector was not looking after the vicar properly, and was keeping him short of food. All these matters went to the episcopal court - the court of the bishop of Winchester - and the bishop must have been heartily sick of Fromond.

If Fromond did not like vicars, so that there was constant friction, the other sort of people that he could not abide were millers, and there were several lawsuits in which local mill owners complained about Fromond's behaviour. His neighbour, who was named Ralph Hurlstone, had a mill near Fromond's rectory and complained that when Fromond wanted fish he went out and caught them in the mill-tail. To make it worse he had several streams of his own running by the house, but he refused to clean them out - with the result that they got blocked up, and this annoyed all the millers because it cut down the flow of water to their mills. Additionally, when a cart-horse went to drink in one of these dirty streams, it just fell over and died - and Fromond refused to pull the dead horse out, so the whole river became polluted. However, the worst thing of all, something which apparently shocked the whole village, was that John Fromond the rector played bowls on his lawn on Sundays. There doesn't seem to have been much of the Drake spirit about Carshalton: the village really didn't take to Fromond. However, what could one expect? He was a Roman Catholic, and he came from Cheam! Perhaps he didn't like Carshalton either.

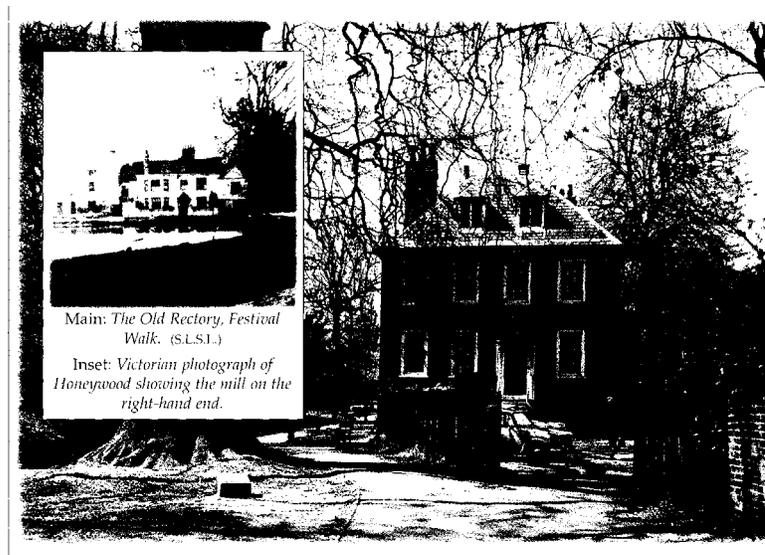
Fromond's parsonage may well have been near the tithe barn in West Street/Pound Street. This has led previous writers to suggest that Fromond's rectory was on the site of the Old Rectory in Festival Walk, and was the house which preceded the present building (late-seventeenth century). This idea would not have been impossible, and the biggest objection to this site - that there weren't any mills nearby - would not have applied in the sixteenth century, because there seem to have been two at that time. One was on the lake in the grounds of Carshalton House (the sluice and foundations were still visible in 1921 when the lake was nearly filled in to make a playing field) and the mill-tail would be the stream along Festival Walk. The other mill may have been at the other end of this stream, where it joins the Ponds, attached to the north side of Honeywood. It has been known for about ten years that there was a much older building embedded in the end of Honeywood,

but to our great surprise we find that photographs of the 1870s and 1890s seem to show it.

AN EARLY VICAR OF CARSHALTON

The vicar of Carshalton from 1612 was named Peter Dawson or Danson. He was not in the vicinity very long because in 1618 his uncle, the vicar of Camberwell, died, and he took over the living of Camberwell from him, although it is possible that he may not have actually given up Carshalton until 1624. He was half Irish. He may have been appointed to Carshalton in the first place for his very strong Roman-Catholic sympathies. Later on he in fact hid and gave shelter to a Roman-Catholic priest who was trying to escape the authorities. He seems to have been a very active and energetic man, until the Civil War broke out in the 1640s, and with the Puritan control of London, he was thrown out of his living by Parliament in 1644, and branded as a 'malignant', a Royalist and a Papist. Although he was subsequently reinstated, he seems to have become very depressed by the great national crisis and simply gave up and let things run down. It is not clear where Peter Dawson/Danson lived when he was vicar of Carshalton but there is a persistent tradition that he lived in the fifteenth-century house next to the east end of the church, used as Kingston's butcher's shop (latterly the Old Ducks Wine Bar). He rarely held services, and when he died in 1652/3 it was said that he had not preached a sermon for the last 12 years. As there wasn't much to do, he literally 'went to pot' - he took to drink. Obviously this was not approved behaviour, so he had to do it secretly - he used to lock himself in the church and drink there - and was sometimes discovered by clerk lying on the altar dead drunk. He could not really afford this lifestyle so he exhorted his parishioners to give alms to the poor - and then he went and emptied the poor box. It is possible that this is Puritan propaganda as it doesn't seem in character from what we know of his earlier life. Peter Dawson/Danson was in fact one of the founder Wilson's Grammar School at Camberwell in 1615, and the uncle whom he succeeded as vicar of Camberwell was Edward Wilson himself.

So there was a close link between Carshalton and Wilson's School right from the beginning, and for next 200 years the vicar or rector of Carshalton was always automatically made one of the governors of Wilson's School. The establishment was moved Wallington from Camberwell in December 1974 and the historic link between Carshalton and Wilson's continues.



After Henry VIII had broken with Rome, English bibles were freely available in the churches. However the Church retained such things as the Mass in Latin, rich church ornament, celibate priests and prayers for the dead. Reformed doctrine and worship only took off after Henry's death (1547). In his son Edward VI's reign clergy were allowed to marry, and the ornaments were removed from parish churches. Along came an English Communion service and in 1552 came a Prayer Book designed for a Reformed England: English, but quite catholic in style.

We should remember here that catholic simply means 'universal'; world-wide, if you like. Throughout this whole period no-one stopped thinking of themselves as catholic, inheritors of the faith all the way down from Jesus' time. They just stopped thinking of themselves as subject to Rome's authority. Roman Catholicism.

After Edward's death Queen Mary restored Papal authority and Roman Catholic practices. But the country was already becoming set in its ways. So, towards the end of her reign she tried executing reformed men and women to see if that would help. It didn't really. Reform had taken hold and was gaining in strength and power – despite Mary's ferocious attempts to stem the tide. These Reformers we shall call, for ease of reference (although it is a clumsy word as it generalises individual beliefs far too much) the Puritans.

Back here in Surrey, few clergy took advantage of such things as Edward's relaxation of the rules on clergy marriages, unlike, for example, those of strongly Protestant Essex. So they were not really touched by Mary's persecutions. The lay folk, though, as we have seen, took advantage of the overall Puritan swing in politics and society to obtain church lands and property. Sometimes churchwardens would dispose of the rich catholic-style ornaments to pay for repairs to the building itself and for work necessitated by Protestant ideals – like whitewashing all the walls over their colourful medieval paintings, or putting humble bench pews in where once, perhaps, there were richly carved stalls.

For the first ten years under Elizabeth I Roman Catholic dissent at the Reforms was tolerated. However, after the Spanish Armada, Catholicism in England understandably took a bit of a back seat and persecutions of the Old Religion began.

By the early seventeenth century, however, there were still a few clergy and laity willing to stand up against the Puritans and to try to restore at least some Catholic doctrine and worship. The fact that they still opposed the Papacy and rule from Rome, perhaps being the biggest factor in their survival in such a climate. One such man was Lancelot Andrewes, now buried in Southwark Cathedral and one time Bishop of Winchester. A learned, gentle, intelligent man, a renowned preacher and writer. In 1636, David Robinson tells us in his excellent little book *Pastors, Parishes and People in Surrey*, it was reported by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, whose name became attached to the movement to restore a degree of catholicism to England, that Andrewes' diocese of Winchester was all 'peace and order'. And that included Carshalton.

This acceptance of more moderate churchmanship, and continued involvement of Church with state led to a group called the Separatists. Those who felt that the country was not pursuing the Reformed ideals hard enough. Eventually a number of them jumped into a little ship at Plymouth called the Mayflower and set off over the Atlantic. Arriving on the distant shore, they named the town they founded after the

town they had left and set about building a new, holy, colony along Puritan principles in a land called by the native Americans Massachusetts.

The Civil War came and went. Charles I had tried to re-assert his personal authority as King – but things had moved on even past this position. Charles, by the way, was a King who, shall we say, leaned towards Catholicism – he even had a Catholic wife, for goodness sake... (You just ask Tony Blair how that feels). Power was growing steadily in the hands of the secular government. In the 1650s, under the influence of Oliver Cromwell, a believer in religious toleration and congregational independence, grew the tradition that is known as Presbyterianism. Churches run by their priests rather than by bishops and certainly not by Rome. He also believed in an established church - linked directly to a law-making Parliament - and was influenced by Congregationalism: the people deciding what was and what was not right and proper to do in terms of the running of their church.

With a lack of confidence in a central Church authority, and, indeed, a release from Catholic notions of heresy - independent churches and ways of expressing religious belief also started to appear. George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, often visited Surrey and so Quakerism arrived in the county.

Then along came Charles II and the Restoration. And speaking of Restoration, it is probably fitting that we bring Christopher back to Carshalton for a while.

Charles brought with him a refocusing on a system dependent on bishops and a further revised book of Common Prayer - like that created under Edward VI and revised by the Protestant James VI of Scotland, James I of England. Those of Christopher's clergy friends who could not accept the changes and the accompanying Act of Uniformity, which made things like the Book of Common Prayer law, were expelled from their benefices and, together with those who had remained independent of the established church (known by some as Dissenters) were subject to... you guessed it: persecution.

The Book of Common Prayer, remains in force right up to today. Common Worship, and its temporary predecessor the Alternative Service Book, running in parallel to, but not superseding it. Which is why you can still find services from the BCP as it's known for short, in churches up and down the country and around the world. As, indeed, can be found the version of the Bible instituted by King James and written in part by Christopher's own bishop at the time Lancelot Andrewes.

I should also say that it was in this age of dissent and nonconformity that some of the great Christian traditions, along with Quakerism, we know of today find their roots – such as the Baptists, Independents and, as mentioned, Presbyterians.

Following Charles was James II. And, wouldn't you know it? He was a Roman Catholic. Well, as soon as he started to muck about with a few of the bishops who wouldn't conform to his idea of good churchmanship, the government realised it had had quite enough of all this to-ing and fro-ing. They had a quick revolution, declared that James had (hem-hem) abdicated and invited a very Protestant Dutch King with English Royal connections onto the throne. His name was William of Orange and his wife, the soon to be queen was called Mary. In fact it was lucky the government did invite him – as he'd already decided to invade England anyway...

William's Protestant kingship was good news for England – a bit of stability at last. Even dissenters and non-conformists were tolerated. However, it was perhaps not

quite so good news for the people of Ireland... especially, well, our Catholic brothers and sisters...

In Carshalton, however, it has to be said, the awful see-sawing of Catholics versus Protestants would finally fade away over the next decades. It was true that Roman Catholics would be denied certain legal rights (and not returned them until the nineteenth century), but the regrettable persecutions would soon become a thing of the past. There were other battles to be fought. The treatment of the workforce, the poverty of many, and the slums and disease became a priority for Christopher and his colleagues. In the early seventeenth century the parish had been made responsible by law for maintaining the poor and setting them to work. The Puritans, in their understandable Christian charitable zeal had, in their time, required the parish to maintain all paupers born within its boundaries. They also required Christopher and his colleagues to keep houses of correction for all 'rogues vagabonds vagrants and lewd women'. Perhaps in Pound Street? In fact an Act of 1552 had even established that parishes were responsible for maintaining their roads and bridges and, in practice, the parish was also the unit for policing.

By the eighteenth century all these responsibilities had come home to roost. Christopher had to find money to ensure the parish was run effectively – out of his budget. This included such things as:

- paying a doctor to tend the poor;
- building a pesthouse (a hospital for sufferers of disease);
- appointing a parish schoolteacher to take school – perhaps even in the vestry; rewarding those who apprehended felons; and
- organising a fund to hire substitutes for parishioners liable for service in the militia.

But the money from the benefice simply could not stretch that far. And Christopher and his parish were constantly striving to find new ways to fulfil their Christian and Statutory duties. However, Christopher's poverty did give the parishioners some measure of control over him*.

Out of this extreme poverty grew an extreme discontent and consequently an increase in feelings of Christian charity and Christian witness. In the Eighteenth century at Christchurch College, Oxford a group of men banded themselves together for this purpose. They went to the services in the college chapels, made their Communion every week, kept the Church fasts, visited and helped the sick and the poor and those in prison. Their companions laughed at them and nicknamed them the Holy Club, and some called them *Methodists*.

John Wesley, one of the leaders of this group was particularly concerned that the rules created by generations of strife within and beyond the English Church meant that the good news couldn't be brought freely to the poor and underprivileged. Although an ordained minister within the Church himself, he bucked the system and began, unlicensed by any bishop, to preach to people on street corners and in market squares. The movement spread but there were not enough preachers to go round. Although loyal to the Church of England, Wesley couldn't wait until that Institution caught up

* This section freely adapted and commandeered for attribution to Christopher's parish ministry from David Robinson's excellent *Pastors, Parishes and People in Surrey* (1989). For further information contact Phillimore & Co Ltd at www.phillimore.co.uk.

with him. So he began to ordain his own ministers. And so the Methodists became a separate denomination.

Christopher spent much of the next few decades seeing that the parish was being run properly and the responsibilities of overseeing the care of souls – both physical and spiritual – were quite burdensome. As the Industrial Revolution took hold and, consequently, greater and greater poverty and deprivation, so Christopher's attitudes changed towards his calling.

A new spirit, of Christian charity and evangelism sprung up for Christopher out of that change. This led to his support of the great movements of the nineteenth century led by such as Shaftesbury, with his care for abused and discarded children and Wilberforce, with his quest to abolish slavery. There were temperance movements – to care for those brought low by readily available cheap drink. The Salvation Army, working with folk cast out uncared for on the streets and in the gutters. The Evangelical Alliance sought to co-ordinate such inter-denominational initiatives. All new ways of serving Christ, that were really the old ways mixed in with a modern and powerful social conscience. They were all part of the work of Christ and his Holy Spirit.

The Victorian empire was now in full swing. Church of England missionaries, amongst others, were spreading throughout the world and bringing the good news with them. Just as the good news had been brought to this country all those centuries ago. Of course there were problems and some horrific abuses. But the overall effect was positive. Many and many societies and nations were created on solid moral and democratic principles derived from scripture. And this evangelism was to have a rich harvest. The numerous and varied cultures that people from the old British colonies enjoyed, have found their way back to the mother country. New ways of expressing Christian joy, sacrifice, forgiveness and love – new ways of worshipping God, exuberant and inspirational, have contributed to today's society in general and the Church in particular.

And it brought other fruit, too. Look at Nelson Mandela's Truth and Reconciliation movement, for example. Bishop Desmond Tutu, its main exponent trained as a priest in the Diocese of Southwark. He was a student at King's College London. He was one of many who brought forgiveness and hope to South Africa. As a result of his and others' efforts and courage he brought an end to the oppressive Apartheid regime. And, this week, saw a series of three programmes on the BBC where Bishop Desmond met with people from both sides of the Protestant/Catholic divide in Northern Ireland and sought to introduce them, too, to the concept of Truth and Reconciliation.

But, again, we race on too fast.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century there came one further twist. This secular, predominantly Protestant evangelism led some clergy – notably people like John Keble, John Henry Newman and Edward Pusey – to remind the Church of England of its catholic roots. Scholars and theologians, they began writing papers 'tracts' arguing for their cause. And Tractarians they would come to be called. They won their argument and the Church of England found itself in the probably unique position of seeking to embrace everyone's calling within its fold. Catholics, Evangelicals, Liberals,

those who believe in adult baptism,

those who believe you don't need a weekly Communion,

those who follow Common Worship, those who prefer the BCP,

those who believe in a contemplative approach to faith,
those who believe God can be worshipped with trumpet and cymbal,
and so on...

This is what is known as the Genius of Anglicanism. A way of people of all different qualities, Christian beliefs and persuasions seeking to rub along together and follow the bidding of the Holy Spirit.

It was a scholar and clergyman, Richard Hooker who, in the religious convulsions of the Reformation sought to define what that genius was. Contrary to popular – and highly uninformed – opinion, the Church has rarely been fully at odds with science and knowledge and learning. Darwin, for example, was in fact a Christian. He sought to understand how God created the world he lived in. They way countless others throughout history had done so. Much of what we now know as science and ‘empiricism’: proving one’s case logically and rationally, grew from Christians exploring the world around them. Again, it was Christians - and Muslims - who preserved and developed the philosophical thought processes of great thinkers like Plato and Aristotle.

The Church took Darwin’s theory of evolution and considered it. A few bishops were outraged and the media in their search for a good story have decided they spoke for all Christians ever since. However, in the main, Church found little that went against what they understood to be the meaning of scripture. Darwin, you should know, is buried at Westminster Abbey. Now, I don’t know about you, but I think it would be rather hard to get in there if you had turned the beliefs of two thousand years of Church on its head. You certainly can’t get a plot under one of the flagstones just by being a fully-paid-up member of the Friends of the Abbey Association.

Since before the days of Augustine of Hippo the Church has recognised that parts of the bible are to be taken literally and parts are poetry and analogy. How to discern which is which has been the real work. Which is what is meant by the concept of heresy. Heresy is a Greek word meaning ‘choice’. It is not, the concept goes, good enough, just to take the bits of bible that you find comfortable or acceptable and run with that alone. You must take all the relevant bits of scripture, be honest about what it means and what its context is, add to this what other prayerful people have thought on the subject and take advice from as many and, importantly, varied sources as possible. And then pray. The just interpretation will follow.

When we read any Christian book. It is wise to look first at the bibliography. If it is short, or only references people with a like mind as the author’s – be aware that this may not be as thorough an examination of any given issue as could be made. Richard Hooker understood this; he was at the heart of some extremely painful confusion over doctrine. How to resolve the conflicting evidence? His eventual conclusion was this. We must consider all the evidence and then apply three tests. What does Scripture say about it? If Scripture is not clear about the matter, what does Tradition – earlier commentators and theologians - say about it? If, still the answer is not clear then, by all means, use reason. Rational thought; common sense.

Scripture, Tradition and Reason. This is the genius of Anglicanism. And you can see it being used even today with the vexed questions that are currently occupying the Church of England. Just because people do not come out and say: this is the situation, this is the way things must be done, does not mean the Church is being weak or woolly. It’s looking carefully and thoroughly at all the evidence, listening to the

thoughts of all prayerful people, whatever their background, and is intent on seeking the mind of God – and only the mind of God in the matter.

And now, to bring us up to date, I think it is time to return Christopher to being simply the twinkle in Mr and Mrs Wheaton's eyes and follow the stories of the actual clergy in the Carshalton of the past hundred years or so. For this I want to return to the excellent Michael Wilks; whose telling of the following tales, cannot be bettered.

NEWS ABOUT THE PARISH CHURCH IN THE LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY

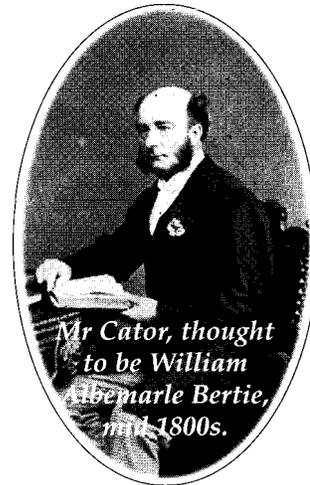
From long before the Reformation Carshalton Parish Church - All Saints - was at the centre of controversy. It was the source of arguments which often divided the local community. Even as late as 1920 there was a fierce argument about whether spitting should be prohibited in church, and, if not, whether spittoons should be provided - as, parishioners were told, was the custom in European churches. This 'spew in the pew' debate, which probably wasn't taken too seriously, pales into insignificance against the rousing events of 30 years earlier.

By the 1880s there was a general feeling that church life was at a low ebb in Carshalton (by this the established Anglican church is meant: all the evidence is that the Dissenting and Roman Catholic churches were flourishing). The rector, the Reverend W.A.B. Cator, was coming to the end of his long reign of nearly 40 years, and had patently ceased to take much interest in the church and its services. Later on, one of his parishioners recalled:

During the Reverend Cator's time we had the same hymn every Sunday morning without fail. It was the hymn 'A few more years shall roll'.

This set the tone for the rest of the service, which was very lugubrious, and the rector's sermon, which was a lengthy reminder that Judgement Day was coming. For the afternoon service there was a litany, with some prayers for the evening service added on: but Mr Cator refused to have an evening service; and when a few members of the congregation arranged one amongst themselves, he generally refused to attend. The congregation had to make a special collection in order to be able to pay a curate, Mr Graham, to come and take it. (Records reveal very little about Mr Graham, except that he lived at Wrythe Green and had a very big nose.)

Concern was also expressed, not only about the services, but about the condition of the church itself. There was a fear that the foundations were being shaken by the constant passage of horses and carts past the building; the churchyard was unkempt and neglected; and ivy was climbing the walls and eating into the stonework. More serious was the feeling that an old medieval church was simply not adequate for a rapidly expanding, lively suburb: the church, wrote a contemporary, was 'picturesque but inconvenient'. There was a strong feeling that improvements had to be made. The Revd Cator had carried out extensive alterations back in the early 1860s, which greatly increased the number of seats: but these changes were now pronounced to be out of date, and therefore ugly. It was felt that here at Carshalton - as all over the country - there should be wonderful new Anglican churches built so that they could accommodate all the rapidly rising populations as soon as they were converted to the Church of England. Big, new churches represented the missionary



endeavour of the Victorian church. Carshalton, which seated 600, was deemed not big enough.

Obviously nothing was going to be done whilst the Reverend Cator remained in charge, but he suddenly died towards the end of 1884. The family cast round for a suitable replacement, and found him in the person of a young man, the Reverend Lord Victor Seymour, born on 6 March 1859. Lord Victor had only a few months' experience of parish work, but he possessed two very valuable qualifications for the job. He was a man of rank, the fourth son of the Marquess of Hertford; and he was engaged to marry Elizabeth Cator, daughter (one of 14 children) of a rather distant cousin of the previous rector. It would keep the position in the family.

In his reminiscences, written 40 years later, long after he had left Carshalton, the Revd Lord Victor suggested that he found Carshalton a very odd place. Having listed some of the notable residents in the big houses, he commented:

I will not mention any more of the residents: but truth compels me to add that some of them were quite unlike any people I had seen before, and no doubt they regarded me as an oddity too.

He certainly came with a reputation for being young and vigorous, and George Brightling, the local historian and churchwarden - who also liked to think of himself as energetic - felt that something ought to be done to impress and please the new rector. Lord Victor was installed three days before Christmas 1884, and George Brightling thought that he would enjoy some carols on Christmas morning. He organised a large party of carol-singers, and at six o'clock in the morning they went along West Street to cluster outside the window of the house where the new rector was staying (now No. 30 West Street). The rector was woken by vigorous singing outside, but he refused to go out in his nightshirt. Brightling complained that although the carol-singers sang and sang, there was no sign of life within, and they eventually left, sadly shaking their heads at the idea that their new rector was a very sleepy fellow.

They could not have been more wrong. Lord Victor was very much a new broom, and a stormy 15 years ensued. He records that his first action on entering the church was to throw out all the mops and brushes, buckets and pails, which the cleaning ladies usually dropped out of sight behind the altar rails or left propped up against the altar itself ready for use. This action was to be symbolic. In the first place Lord Victor was a protagonist of the ecumenical movement: the parish, he records, could not decide whether to suspect him of being a Papist in disguise or, even worse, a secret member of the Salvation Army. This last remark was the result of an event which astonished the parish. Having commented that it was a pity that the Salvation Army, if its members really were the Christians that they claimed to be, did not hold their parades in church, the usual congregation at the Parish Church was thrown into a state of consternation on the following Sunday. The doors suddenly opened and in marched the Salvation Army, with drums beating, bringing with them all the poor in the parish that they could find, and filling every corner of the church.

Lord Victor recorded afterwards that they were very well behaved and kept fairly quiet - although there were some unusually lusty 'Amens', and every now and then enthusiasm got the better of some member of the Army who would shout out 'God bless you my Lord'. Lord Victor emerged with an entirely unexpected reputation as



protector of the Salvation Army. He recorded his belief that his parishioners no longer threw members of the Salvation Army into the Ponds or hauled them through the mud - which had been the normal way that Carshalton treated the Salvation Army. Only a few years previously a Salvation Army march at the Wrythe had broken up under a hail of mud, stones and flour bags. The residents were a violent lot at Carshalton in those days. However, Lord Victor did not keep his new 'converts' - a little later, in 1892, the Salvation Army built its own meeting house or citadel at the corner of North Street and Wrythe Green. New mission churches were built, such as St Andrews at the bottom of Wrythe Lane in 1886 and the first Good Shepherd church - known as the 'tin church' or the 'iron church' - in Stanley Park Road in 1890. Meanwhile Lord Victor had insisted that the Carshalton rectory in the High Street (now the shopping precinct) should be extensively re-built to make

a suitable home for himself and his new bride - he married Elizabeth Cator in September 1885. What he really wanted to do above all was to knock down the Parish Church, and build a new one.

Not surprisingly, this proposal caused a furore, and Carshalton was split between those who wanted to renovate and restore the old church, and those who wanted a new building. Ironically, the bulk of the population (those who were not Anglicans, nor churchgoers) and what Lord Victor disdainfully termed 'the public house element hostile to religion' were in favour of conservation, of keeping the old church. Their motive, however, was not preservationist pure and simple: they recognised that restoration was cheaper than new buildings, and they were afraid that to build a new church would lead to an increase in the tithes, which they bitterly resented having to pay. By today's standards, the proposals sound quite modest. At a meeting in 1889 the architects (the celebrated firm of Blomfields) explained the scheme and the cost was estimated at £10,000. It was announced that work would begin when half this amount had been raised. The rector made strenuous efforts to get funds, and after only a year it was stated at the Vestry meeting in December 1890 that £5000 had been subscribed, and permission was sought for the work to begin. To the rector's dismay, the meeting voted against a new church. This was hailed as a victory for democracy: the battle cry was raised that the church meant 'people, not buildings'. The local paper commented that Carshalton was suffering from having two lords: the lord of the manor, who promised everything and did nothing, and the lord of the rectory, who did everything and promised nothing. Both were trying to turn Carshalton into a new heaven and a new earth. There was a violent paper war.

The rector promptly retaliated against the rejection of his plans by demanding that a referendum should be held, at which only members of the congregation could vote. He declared that he would be present at the poll to ensure that everyone voted properly. Ladies from the congregation toured the district to canvass the voters and compel them to come in. As one scurrilous contemporary poem, called 'Meditation amongst the Tombs', was phrased:

*Twas a wintery day near the end of the year,
With a dull leaden sky growing cheerless and drear,
When some elderly spinsters of gentle degree,
Who disseminate tracts with small packets of tea,
Braved the sleet and the snow, ransacked alley and slum
(Though it can't be denied that they looked very glum),
Their mission and earnest endeavour to find,
And ensnare every voter, though halt, lame or blind.
For their dear little parson a fresh craze has found,*

*And declared he will pull the old church to the ground.
There, in place of the ivy-clad, time-honoured pile,
Would build a cathedral, ritualistic in style.*

It is a dreadful poem, and it deserved to fail: the rector's tactics were highly successful - as the poet lamented:

*The parson sat snug by the voting-room fire,
Where the slightest dissent soon stirred up his ire.
Arid at last, with the help of each feeble old crone,
This dear little man got the way of his own.
Yes, the doom of our temple is finally sealed,
And pickaxe and crowbar destruction now wield.
And the tombs of our dearest, by navvies o'ertrud,
Till it's hard to distinguish the acre of God.*

Fortunately a survey of the tombstones was made before work began. In point of fact financial considerations made it desirable to keep more of the old church than had originally been intended. For example, the tower and bells were reprieved at a fairly late stage. Nevertheless, the side of the old church facing the Ponds was removed, and what was virtually a new church was built onto it, double the size, so that there are almost two churches now in the one building. A memorial stone was laid in the new chancel on 3 October 1891.

The rector scored a great triumph over his critics by getting a member of the royal family to come and lay it. She was a daughter-in-law of Queen Victoria, the Duchess of Albany, the widow of Prince Leopold. She had been to Sutton earlier in the year; and the rector felt that if she could go to Sutton, she certainly ought to come to Carshalton - and come she did. There was a great procession down North Street, with the road so thickly decorated by bunting and flags donated by Carshalton traders that it is said the railway bridge was quite hidden from view. The procession then journeyed down to the High Street to have lunch at the new rectory, before visiting the church, and then on to a reception in Carshalton Park. The whole of Carshalton was on holiday. Never, said the local paper, had so many people gathered in the village - and there was not a single inharmonious note to mar the proceedings (although in the next paragraph it reported that pickpockets had made a great harvest in the crowd). In fact this royal visit provoked a furious outburst from the opposition:

*Who tricked a Royal Duchess, who?
To win her smiles to pay the screw...
For 'twas a low, disloyal thing:
A Royal Lady here to bring
Our parish quarrels to partake,
For show and ceremonial's sake...
The crumbled bones in death outcried
Against the wrecker's hateful pride,
Whilst royalty was duped to play
The partisan, then hie away ...
Remember, Carshalton, beware!
You guides of royalty take care,
Let not your charges intermix
With local fights or politics.*

*Oh, what a wasteful deed was done
On Wandle's bank at Carshalton.*

The controversy now became really vicious, and the pamphlet warfare reached a degree of bitterness which one might expect to find in medieval and Reformation tracts. The rector was accused of trying to sell Carshalton to the Pope, of grinding the faces of the poor to get money for his new church, and of threatening damnation to those who would not pay.

For example, there is a spoof sermon in verse, which was attributed to the rector. The implication is that he was preaching it to the poor at the Wrythe on 17 November 1891. The text claims that he 'fell among thieves':

*I'll Romanise the people; I'll have them follow me;
I'll let them know I have the power
To bind and to set free.
I am the only telephone
By which their prayers can reach
The seat of mercy up above
Within the golden street.
So the parish priest I mean to be,
Their sole end earthly king...*

Although most of it is too dreadful to include here, the text continued:

*Treat thy neighbour as thyself,
The scriptures plainly say.
But what 's the Book to me?
I live in modern day.
Do I follow Christ?
Or do I follow Rome?
When a man can't pay his tithes,
I'll sell him out of home.*

Of course these tactics simply did not pay off. They merely alienated sympathy by being so vicious and scurrilous. The preservationist mob enjoyed a brief moment of triumph in 1892 when the money ran out, and the rebuilding came to a halt:

*There stands our new Temple, a shapeless great hulk,
With hoarding enclosing the unfinished bulk.
And there it will stand while moons wax and wane:
The dismal result of a project insane.*

Not surprisingly the conservationists' jubilation was short-lived - the residents weren't going to put up with this sort of thing, and soon money for the new church was flowing in again, and the rebuilding continued.

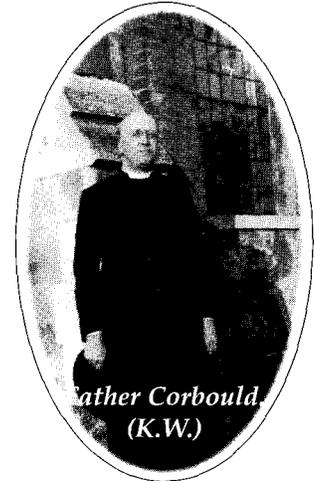
The last service was held in the old church on 21 November 1892, and the first in the new part of the building took place a week later. The services had to be repeated in duplicate and triplicate because so many people were now coming to church to see the new building and find out what all the fuss was about. The new building was consecrated the following year, and although work continued for another 20 years, the issue had been

settled. Carshalton was to have its new cathedral, despite all the arguments for preservation. The vicar was not called Victor for nothing.

The charismatic Lord Victor Seymour was succeeded in 1901 by the Revd George Philip Trevelyan, who only lasted a year. In 1902 George Bowyer Vaux took over as rector and he continued in office until 1919. He made recommendations that the area of Carshalton on the Hill should become a separate parish.

Father Corbould took over in December 1919. He was an extreme Anglo-Catholic whose services differed little from those of the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council of 1962/5. A figure of some controversy, he would often dress in cassock, douillette (long double-breasted overcoat) and 'soup plate' hat, with the addition of frock-coat and top hat when visiting London. Small boys were apt to shout 'There goes the Pope', when he passed, thus attired. He worked for the unity of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches with the Church of England and is said to have been awarded a medal by the Greek Orthodox Church. Much of the fine decorative work by Sir Ninian Comper was added to the church during his time. Father Corbould lived in the rectory in the High Street and was unmarried. He died in 1957.

His successor in 1958 was the Revd Leigh Cameron Edwards, a Welshman by birth, who was less extreme than his predecessor. He officiated for the next 43 years and must have christened, married or buried someone from most families in Carshalton. He became a well-known and loved figure. He lived at first in the Victorian rectory, but moved to a new building in Talbot Road. Twice married, his eight children all took their turn at serving or singing in the choir.



So we come to the Good Shepherd. And here I mostly follow the late David Parsons, once a regular and much valued member of this church. Until the middle of the nineteenth century this southern part of Carshalton was still mainly common fields, apart from Hungry Bottom (situated at the southern end of what we know now as Boundary Road) and the house called Barrow Hedges. There are people even now at the church - particularly Winnie - who can remember when all around were simply lavender fields. The Lavender site open throughout the summer in the allotments is a reminder... as is the sculpted sprig of lavender outside Sainsbury's in Wallington ... and we've got a few little bushes in our garden, too.

In the meantime, Eastern Surrey had been transferred from Winchester Diocese to Rochester diocese. Eventually a new Diocese, Southwark, would be created (in fact it celebrated its hundredth birthday last year) and to which we now belong.

The first housing development was in the area of Stanley Road. This was romantically called Carshalton-on-the-Hill by the developers in order to attract custom. However their lofty ideals were mocked by the locals who, probably ironically, named the area Jerusalem. Although it boasted grand houses and a hotel complete with tennis courts and a park, it was unable to attract custom. But unfortunately no business case could be made to run the gas main up the hill to these dwellings. So the houses were divided into flats and the poorer inhabitants of the district came to make their homes here instead.

A railway had nevertheless been constructed between Sutton and Croydon and opened in May 1847. One of the earliest ever built. The railways had a station originally called Carshalton; preparatory for the opening of the Mitcham and Sutton Railway line

this was renamed Wallington on 1 September 1868. A little halt also called Carshalton was subsequently given the additional name Beeches to differentiate it from the station on the Mitcham/Sutton line. No one seems to know why there is an Avenue of Beeches down the road. The best thought is that it was perhaps the drive of a great house. But which one is not clear. My own view is that it was simply another developer's ploy to make the area more attractive to potential clients during the creation of the new estates round here.

It was Lord Victor Seymour who extended All Saints, had a daughter church of St Andrew built in Wrythe Lane and made arrangements for the increasingly neglected - and if you believe some stories - disorderly folk on Carshalton on the Hill.

Initially a Mission room was set up in a large house in Stanley road with a Lay Reader. In 1890 however, a small iron church was built at what is now 40 Stanley Road. One of the All Saints curates was assigned to work there although no formal appointment existed. Towards the end of the century it became apparent that a separate ecclesiastical district for Carshalton on the Hill was needed. In 1900 a larger iron building - the first purpose-built church to be actually formally dedicated (by the bishop of Rochester) was built in Stanley Park Road. Its location was where the row of shops is - between what is now the Junior and Infant School and the garage. The first church was later dismantled and re-erected behind the church for use as a church hall. The bishop of Rochester, Dr Edward Talbot in fact went on to become the first Bishop of Southwark, predecessor to our Bishop Tom.

By 1915 discussions to turn the community based in Stanley Park Road into a parish church independent of All Saints began. Following the end of the First World War, a site on Queen Mary's Avenue was purchased. The hospital of the same name had been built in 1909 as the Southern Convalescent Hospital on the lands of Westcroft Farm. A year later it had turned into the Children's Infirmary for the sick children of London and two years after that, Queen Mary gave it her patronage and her name. And just another little aside for interest's sake, especially for those of you who don't know, further up the hill is Oaks Park. Once owned by Lord Derby, close to racecourses at both Banstead and Epsom Downs, the classic race The Oaks is named after this favourite home of the noble lord.

The new Church of the Good Shepherd, this one, was designed by Martin Travers and built 'by great effort and self sacrifice by the congregation' between 1929 and 1930. Through Whist drives, Donations and Lent Savings the community raised £4000. The Bishop of Southwark Cyril Garbutt provided for a further £2000. Eventually the whole development cost £7000 but a further £3000 was needed to build a chapel. This was never raised. And it was only in the Millennium year that the present congregation raised a further £750,000 or so to complete the task of those Christian folk who went before us, and to also create the new extension in which we are sitting right now. The work is not finished however, as we are now proceeding to consider prayerfully what to do with the North Side of the building.

The church itself is in the Spanish Colonial style much favoured by Travers and was the recipient of a positive review by no less an expert architectural critic than John Betjeman. The Old Church was dismantled and used for a time by the British Legion down in Carshalton.

With a new building and a community of its own to serve, calls were redoubled for an independent parish to be created. But the then Rector, Father Corbould, did not

agree to the change. Finally, owing to the vision and wisdom of the late and greatly lamented Leigh Edwards, Rector of All Saints Carshalton, in 1965, the Parish of the Church of the Good Shepherd was created. Before that date there had only been Curates or Priests in Charge. After it there have been only three Vicars: Basil Tuffield, Gordon Jeff and, to round off this little three thousand year journey rather neatly... Christopher.

Thanks be to God.

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