



*St. Michael and All Angels, Abingdon  
1867 – 1967*

## PREFACE TO THE 2016 EDITION

This edition of Mr Norris' booklet, first published in 1967, has been prepared from a scanned copy of the original. The typographic conventions used by Mr Norris have been largely retained though the typewriter font of the original has been replaced by Times New Roman, 12 pt. A few spelling errors in the original have been detected and retained, but marked [*sic*]. An apparent inconsistency in the text, the date at which Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament was introduced has been marked with a note in square brackets.

David A. Duce  
March 2016

ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, ABINGDON

by

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With Foreword

by

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Published in 1967 –  
the Centenary Year of the Dedication of the Church.



## FOREWORD

Among the vestments used at St. Michael's is a set which was originally intended for the new Cathedral Church of St. Michael at Coventry. The chasuble is ample, of a roughspun material similar to what Our Lord would have worn. It is lined with rich purple, reminiscent of the robe with which Pilate mocked him. On the back there is a brilliant tapering column of colour, all the colours of the spectrum in order, leading up to the cross at the top. These vestments are symbolic not only of the High Priesthood of Jesus but also of the history of the Church. It is a multi-coloured history. The predominating colour has been different from age to age, but each colour needs all the rest in order to find its consummation in the pure Light of the World.

It would be wrong to say that the history of St. Michael's is as multi-coloured as all that. I think the following pages show that, in the eyes of the world, the first hundred years have been remarkably uneventful ones. Mr. Norris's detailed chronicle of the Church shows, however, how the colours have subtly changed. From the days when the Reverend Mr. Dodson appealed to the gentry of Berkshire to alleviate the spiritual destitution of the people of Abingdon to the days when all committed Christians are responsible for the maintenance and the furtherance of the Church is a far cry. We find it difficult to think ourselves back into an age when they found it necessary to move the font from its liturgically proper position near the West door to the South West corner of the Church in order to provide additional seating. Yet it is useful to be reminded of these things, if only as a warning that the colours are still changing now, and will change again in the future.

What of the future? The reunion of the Church of England and the Methodist Church seems to be not far away; and there is a large Methodist Church with well-appointed ancillary buildings within three minutes' walk of St. Michael's.

How will the two buildings be used? St. Michael's was originally built to serve those many people living in Ock Street whose descendants now live on the new estates South of the Ock. There are plans to build a new ecumenically organized Church in that area. What part will St. Michael's play in the development of Church life in that part of the town?

These are questions which history cannot possibly answer. But they are, I hope, questions which this history shows us we ought to ask. For the Church is not pews but people; and the needs of the people who make up the Church are changing rapidly. I have a feeling that the next hundred years are going to be more multi-coloured than the last.

Gordon Roe.  
Lent, 1967.



## Planning a New Church

The Church of Saint Michael and All Angels, Abingdon, is now one hundred years old. It was consecrated by The Right Reverend Samuel Wilberforce, Lord Bishop of Oxford, on Friday, the 25th January 1867, in a service which commenced at 11.30 a.m. on that day.

The provision of this Church must be one of the most enduring services which was rendered to Abingdon by the Reverend Nathaniel Dodson, M.A., and indeed, the acquisition of the site, the planning and erection of the Church building and the raising of funds to pay for the work, must have occupied an appreciable part of his time and energies during the latter years of his very long incumbency.

Mr. Dodson was instituted to the united benefice of St. Helen and St. Nicholas, Abingdon, on the 29th July 1824. At that time Abingdon was in the gift of the Crown, but later passed into the patronage of the Bishop of the Diocese. He died on the 30th August 1867.

The circumstances which led to the building of St. Michael's Church, Abingdon, are briefly as follows :-

The Rev. N. Dodson, as Vicar of Abingdon, was responsible for the Cure of Souls, not only of the Town of Abingdon (of which the population was nearly 7,000) but also of the Hamlets of Sandford, Shippon and Northcourt, which were included in the Parish of Abingdon; and in addition he was responsible for the Parish of Drayton. The lack of adequate Church accommodation in the Town of Abingdon and its three Hamlets gave him grave concern. In about 1850, Mr. Dodson estimated that the two Churches of St. Helen and St. Nicholas could together accommodate about 1,500 people at any one time, out of a total population for the Parish of something like 10,000. In fact both his figures appear to be somewhat on the high side, and it is suggested that 1,250 and 8,000 would be nearer the actuals than 1,500 and 10,000.

In 1867, and indeed until about 1936, there was a concentration of population in the proximity of St. Michael's Church, in the "Courts", on both sides of Ock Street. These "Courts", which contained about 130 dwellings and housed some 500 persons, were demolished shortly before the 1939/1945 World War and the residents moved southwards across the Ock River to the then new Council Housing Estate in Saxton Road.

In order to provide for the spiritual needs of the people of Abingdon and its Hamlets (not, of course, including Drayton), it was proposed:

- (a) to divide the Parish into five Districts — three in the Town (each containing about 2,000 inhabitants) and two in the country (Sandford and Shippon).
- (b) to build and endow three new Churches — one each in Abingdon Town, Sandford and Shippon.
- (c) to provide five Parsonage Houses, and

(d) to provide each District with a School.

Mr. Dodson's earliest public appeal for funds for Church building was issued in the late 1840's. It is interesting because it shows that Mr. Dodson hoped to raise the money by appeal to the gentlemen of the County, since Abingdon was at that time the County Town.

"It is hoped that the singular privilege enjoyed by Abingdon of being situated in a County which has the honor (sic) of containing the ancient residence of our Sovereigns, and being in many parts so richly studded with Mansions and Villas of different Nobility and Gentry, will insure abundant contributions in support of the proposed improvement in its means of Public Worship and Pastoral

Superintendence. It is hoped that every Gentleman in the County of Berks will make some contribution proportionate to his means, for the relief of the spiritual destitution of the County Town of his own Shire".

In a letter dated March 14th 1849 to the Rev. Thomas Farley, Rectory House, Ducklington, Witney, on the same subject, Mr. Dodson wrote :-

"I hope to have a Committee in every (?) town in the County, and I have a strong claim on the Crown, not only as Patron, but as the owner, in the person of the Prince of Wales, of one third of the land and that stolen from the Church by Hen: 8."

By 1860, two new Churches and Schools had been erected, in Sandford and Shippon; moreover, sums of rather over £300 and of £1,000 had been set aside for their endowments; the outlay had been about £4,000, which had almost exhausted the funds subscribed. A site for the third Church (which was to be St. Michael's) had then recently been obtained.

On 9th November 1860, a fresh Appeal was therefore launched, for funds towards the erection of a new Church in Abingdon. The subscription list was headed with offers from the Diocesan Church Building Society of £400, from the Rev. R.L. Child, DD. and the Rev. W. Dodson, M.A. of £100 each, and a donation from St. Peters in the East, Oxford, of £15. To these were rapidly added donations of £50 each by the Earl of Radnor, R. Benyon, Esq., M.P. and N. Walter, Esq., M.P.; also donations by the Hon. P.P. Bouverie, M.P., the Bishop of Oxford, the Archdeacons of Oxford and of Berks, the Duke of Marlborough, Lord Redesdale, Worcester College, Oxford, the Provost of Oriel, the Warden of All Souls, the President of Trinity, the Rev. J.P. Tweed of Exeter College, Oxford, Blandy Jenkins of Kingston House, and many others.

Although Mr. Dodson commenced planning a new Church in Abingdon in 1850 or earlier, the fulfilment of his intention was delayed by difficulty in obtaining a suitable site. He had nevertheless pressed on continuously towards his objective and saw his plan fulfilled shortly before he ceased to be Vicar, and was succeeded in May 1868 by the Rev. Alfred Potts, B.D.

Nine entries relating to this Church appear in the Minutes of the Oxford Diocesan Church Building Society between 6th May 1851 and 30th July 1867.

An entry of 6th May 1851 reads as follows :-



"application for aid towards building a new Church at Abingdon 725 made to the Committee by the Rev. N. Dodson; but the plans and specifications, not having been submitted to the Diocesan Architect in accordance with the Society's Rules, the consideration of the case was postponed".

On 5th August 1851, the application was further considered and "a grant of £400 was voted". It may be assumed, therefore, that, as early as August 1851, plans and specifications had been prepared and approved.

The next three entries in the Minutes record applications by the Rev. N. Dodson for the renewal of the grant of £400; he explained that the delay in building was due to "the great difficulty experienced in procuring the site".

A Minute of 7th May 1861 records that the site had then been obtained and that "the building will be commenced in the course of the Spring".

On 8th May 1865 the Committee of the Church Building Society determined that the grant of £400 should be "considered as being forfeited through length of time" (the grant having been originally made on 5th August 1851) and that a new application for a grant should be submitted: "the sum of £300 being provisionally promised in lieu of £400 actually granted".

The Rev. Nathaniel Dodson did not take this lying down, but pressed his claim for the full £400; ultimately the Committee resolved that £100 be paid in addition to £300 then already paid "from a feeling of kindly consideration towards the Rev. N. Dodson." The last Minute (30th July 1867) records that a further £100 was in fact paid.

A letter written on 3rd February 1865 by Mr. Dodson to the Bishop of Oxford records that the Church was designed by Mr. Scott; that it would hold 650 persons; and that the cost of the building would, when completed, be about £2,500, but that he had not, at that date, half of this sum. The sum of £400 referred to above had not at that date been paid: the records of the Church Building Society show that £300 was paid over during the first quarter of 1867 and the final £100 some months later.

### The Site

The delay, or "great difficulty", in procuring the site for the Church, to which Mr. Dodson referred on various occasions, was no doubt, at least partly, due to the fact that the vendors had to obtain the necessary powers to sell and convey the site. These powers were granted in an Order of the High Court of Chancery dated 18th July 1860. The purchase of the site was in fact completed 8 months thereafter.

By a Conveyance dated 20th March 1861 the Master and Governors of the Hospital of Christ of Abingdon conveyed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England, in consideration of £100, a freehold site for an intended New Church "to be devoted when consecrated to ecclesiastical purposes for ever". The site is described in the Conveyance as "containing by admeasurement one rood and thirteen perches

being part of a field called Conduit Field". The Conveyance bears a plan, drawn to a scale of 2 chains (i.e. 132 ft.) to 1 inch, but no measurements are shown on it.

The Vendor of the site (commonly known as Christ's Hospital) is an ancient charitable corporation, which owns and manages the almshouses known as Christ's Hospital or Long Alley, which are situated on the west side of St. Helen's Churchyard.

The iron railings which originally enclosed the site were removed during the second World War (1939-1945) in common with many other iron railings. The present site was enclosed with the present posts and cathedral chains in 1954 at a cost of £150, of which £63 was contributed by the Government as war compensation.

Until the Spring of 1896 the only access to St. Michael's Church was from the road on the north side. In 1896 the Governors of Christ's Hospital opened up a new road (St. Michael's Avenue) which gave access to the south side of the Church and which is described in the "Abingdon Parish Magazine" for May 1896 as passing through "an avenue of well grown Canadian elms".

#### Consecration and Dedication

On 16th January 1867 Public Notice was given of intention to consecrate the new Church on Friday, 25th January 1867 at 11.30 a.m.

On 23rd January 1867 a Petition was presented to the Lord Bishop of Oxford by "the Reverend Nathaniel Dodson, the Churchwardens and other inhabitants of the Parish of St. Helen, Abingdon" "to consecrate the land conveyed on 20th March 1861 and the new Church recently erected on some part thereof".

The Church was duly consecrated and dedicated by the Bishop on 25th January 1867 and the Deed containing the Sentence of Consecration is, together with the Conveyance and Petition, preserved in the Bodleian Library. The Deed of Sentence of Consecration, after reciting the Conveyance of 20th March 1861 and that a new Church had been erected on part of the land so conveyed and that the remainder (which surrounded the Church) "was about to be enclosed with a proper and substantial fence" and that the "Church had been properly fitted up and adorned and was ready for consecration", continues as follows :-

"Now we Samuel by Divine permission Lord Bishop of Oxford being willing to comply with the reasonable and pious prayer of the said Petitioners Do by these presents by Our Ordinary and Episcopal authority separate for the future the said newly erected Church from all common and profane uses and do consecrate and set apart the same for the Worship of Almighty God the administration of the Sacraments the saying of Prayers and preaching the Word of God purely and sincerely and for performing therein all other Religious Ceremonies in accordance with the Liturgy of the United Church of England and Ireland And we do hereby dedicate the said Church to Almighty God by the name of Saint Michael and All Angels as and to be a Chapel of Ease to the Parish Church of Saint Helen Abingdon"

## Description of the Building

St. Michael's is a cruciform building with fairly short arms. It comprises a nave with clerestory and a chancel, both with a high pitched roof; north and south aisles with lean-to roofs; north and south transepts; south porch; vestries in the north east angle between the chancel and the transept; and boiler house in the south east angle.

The building is of roughly cut stone and is roofed with red tiles.

The total interior length is 109ft. 7in. and the maximum width (on the line of the transepts) 67ft., while the width across the west end is 51ft. 3in.

The Church was designed by George Gilbert Scott, R.A. It is roughly contemporary with his Albert Memorial (1864) and St. Pancras Station (1865) and a little before St. Mary Abbots, Kensington, which he rebuilt between 1869 and 1872. According to one critic it reflects his rejection of the "pure Gothic" style of his early period in favour of a more Continental type of Gothic, which is discernible in his work after 1864.

Mr. Scott (later Sir Gilbert Scott) also designed Sandford and Shippon Churches.

## Structural Repairs and additions

The major structural repair which has had to be carried out over the course of the past one hundred years was the complete re—roofing of the Church. In about November 1907 it was realised that the work would have to be undertaken at an estimated cost of £500 and a Committee was set up to raise funds. Work was commenced about mid—1908 and the opportunity taken to extend the roof and walls of the Choir Vestry at the same time: this work necessitated the cleaning of the organ. These works were completed and the Church reopened for worship on Sunday 13th September 1908, at a total cost of £515.17.0d.

In 1951 a further sum of money had to be spent on repairs to the fabric and in particular to the roof, which was found on examination to be in need of urgent attention. A report and estimate in the sum of £558.14.3d was obtained from Messrs. Collett & Rogers, and necessary repairs were carried out.

In 1961 and 1964 further repairs were carried out at the approximate cost shown below :-

		£.
<u>1961</u>	Roof North Aisle:	215
	Roof of Vestry:	152
	External stack pipe:	135
	Total:	£502
<u>1964</u>	Repairs to roof & windows:	£245

In 1960 a trust was formed with the object of providing funds for repairs to the fabric of the Church. This trust which was to be known as St. Michael's Fabric Fund,

was opened with a legacy of £50 left by Louisa Rush: the intention being that funds should be invested by the Diocesan Board of Finance, as Custodian Trustees; the income only being available for repairs; and the Abingdon Parochial Church Council being the Administrative. [*sic*] Trustees.

There is at present (1966) a move on foot to build a Church Room and new boiler house on to the south east corner of the Church, with direct access from the Church, as well as from the outside. This building will be erected on consecrated ground; it will provide a convenient place for holding Sunday Schools and other instructional classes, as well as meetings connected with the Church and other ecclesiastical purposes: it will contain a small kitchen and toilet facilities. The estimated cost is about £2,500.

The provision of a Church Room was first considered in 1961 and approval in principle to the scheme was given by the Parochial Church Council on the 31st October 1961. No active steps to prepare plans or raise funds were taken until about the beginning of 1966, however, as in 1961 a new heating plant a more urgent requirement.

### The Chancel

#### The High Altar

On the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels 1911 a new altar was dedicated by the Bishop of Reading.

The Rev. H.T. Maitland, M.A., then Vicar of Abingdon wrote at that time: "There has been a feeling for a long time that the present Altar-table is not sufficiently handsome and dignified for its holy purpose. It will be a joy have one more worthy of the service which it represents".

This Altar is a notable piece of furniture. It was designed by Mr. Harry Redern, F.R.I.B.A. and built by a local craftsman, Mr. Amos Broughton, who is said to have been remunerated at the rate of 9d per hour. The whole is very solidly constructed of South African walnut and stands on twenty legs of solid walnut, each 4 inches square. No screws, nails or brads were used in the construction: all joints are secured with wooden pins. The panels of the Super Altar are of coriander wood. The centre panel of the upper part is ornamented with eleven silver stars to represent eleven of the Apostles; while the remainder is ornamented with inlaid mother-of-pearl. Each of the three panels below bears the word "Holy" in silver: while the areas between are ornamented with chevrons of inlaid mother-of-pearl and two crosses in silver. The approximate cost of the new Altar was £65.

The original High Altar now stands in St. George's Chapel, in the North Transept.

A pair of brass candlesticks for use on the High Altar was given by Mr. H.E. Compson in 1892, in memory of his mother. They were designed by Somers, Clarke & Micklethwaite, well known church architects and were supplied by Barkentin & Kraal of Regent Street, London. This pair of candlesticks will at present be found on

the low step in front of the statue of the Virgin and Child at the south end of the chancel step.

In September 1889 a pair of brass standard lights was provided for the Sanctuary by St. Michael's Guild. The date when these standards ceased to be used is not known - as each standard bore 12 gas lights, it seems probable that they were removed either before, or when, the Church went over to electric light in 1944. They were apparently sold as scrap metal in September 1942 by resolution of St. Michael's Committee.

### The Reredos

In July 1878 a Faculty was obtained to carry out three improvements, namely:-

- (a) To repave the floor of the chancel and provide an additional step 7" high,
- (b) To erect a reredos, and
- (c) To erect a chancel screen,

all these works to be carried out in accordance with the designs prepared by Mr. Edwin Dolly, architect, of 40 Great Marlborough Street, London, W.

The proposal to apply for the Faculty was considered and the architect's designs were examined at a Vestry Meeting held on 1st June 1878. It was resolved by a majority vote (there being one contrary vote) that the proposal be approved and the donors of the reredos and screen thanked. The one objector "protested against the introduction of graven images into the panels of the proposed reredos".

It is interesting to note that this lone objector did in fact get his way. As will appear hereafter, the carved panels were not inserted into the reredos.

The reredos, which was the gift of Edward Godfrey of Abingdon is described in the Faculty as being of freestone not marble, the centre feature to consist of a white marble Cross and Calvary on a red marble background: the four side panels to have carved in low relief incidents of the life of Our Lord: the total height of the reredos above the floor of the chancel to be 9ft. 1in. and the total width 10ft. 6ins.

This reredos was erected as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey of Abingdon. Mr. Daniel Godfrey, who died on the 9th February 1877, aged 78 years, was buried on Ash Wednesday, 14th February, after a funeral service at St. Michael's Church which was attended by the Mayor and Corporation and a great number of sympathisers.

Mr. Daniel Godfrey was a monumental mason. The family business was carried on by his son and also by his grandson, Dennis Godfrey; indeed it is still conducted by the present owner in the name of Godfrey at 161a Ock Street. In these circumstances, it seems highly probable that the reredos was made in Abingdon by a local craftsman.

By Michaelmas Day 1878 the work on the chancel floor had been completed at a cost of about £63, which was raised by public subscriptions; the chancel screen, which is also referred to in the Faculty, had been completed; and the reredos, in

memory of the late Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey, had also been completed, with the exception of the white marble side panels, carved in low relief.

No record has been traced of the work ever having been completed. In fact, the side panels, which are now in position, are not of white marble carved in low relief, but of perfectly plain pink marble, which bears no signs of any sort of carving. It seems probable that the plain panels were inserted in 1878 as a temporary measure and were never replaced by carved panels.

At a date which has not been definitely ascertained, but is probably either when the new altar was installed in 1911 or very soon after (and which must have been before 1914) this reredos was covered up by a red dossal curtain and at, or about, Christmas 1914 the red dossal curtain was replaced by a green tapestry dossal curtain (which is still behind the present dossal curtain).

In 1938 or 1939 the height of this dossal was reduced so that the top of the dossal curtain was at about the same level as the top of the reredos (that is, just below the bottom of the east window).

In about 1951 the present cream coloured dossal curtain was placed in its present position (about a foot higher than the earlier one and covering the bottom of the east window: it is also about a foot wider).

At the present time (1967) the reredos is in a damaged and incomplete condition.

### The Choir Stalls

The present oak choir stalls were provided shortly after the 1914-18 War. The stalls on the North side were presented by Mr. C. Alfred Pryce in memory of his son, Owen Pryce, who fell at Meteren in Flanders on 14th April 1918, and who had been a choirman. Those on the South side were provided by St. Michael's Guild. At about the same time, the Guild replaced the original iron Communion rails — with the present oak rails.

### Processional Crosses

The Church possesses two at the present time. The larger of the two is of brass. There seems to be some doubt as to whether it is, or is not, the Cross provided by St. Michael's Guild in 1887 at a cost of £13.10.0d.

The second Processional Cross (a Crucifix) is unusually small and appears to be of iron and an alloy - probably brass. This Processional Cross is reputed to be of 16th century workmanship, but this is doubtful: it may be a modern imitation of an early style. It was dedicated at the altar on St. Michael's Day 1909, shortly after it had been presented to the Church. The name of the donor and the origin of this Cross are not known. It stands by the door into the Priest's vestry at the east end of the choir stalls.

### The Chancel Screen [sic]

The Faculty which was obtained in 1878 also authorised the provision of a Chancel Screen in accordance with the design of Mr. Edwin Dolly, architect, of 40 Great Marlborough Street, London. W. and which is described as follows: "to build a dwarf wall at the west end of the chancel of bath stone having a coping of polished alabaster set thereon and a dwarf screen and gates of wrought iron: the total height of the screen above the floor of the nave to be 4ft. 2ins." This work was carried out at the expense of Lt.Col. Henry Archibald McNair.

In 1898 the wrought iron screen was gilded and painted at the expense of a Mr. Brewerton. Faint traces of the gilding can still be seen. The gates are now stored in the boiler house.

### The Nave and Transepts

The South transept is now used as a Lady Chapel and the North transept as St. George's Chapel.

The seating in the nave, aisles and transepts is of pitch pine As at present arranged, they will seat about 400 people; a further 32 can be seated in the choir, giving a total seating accommodation of about 430. The Church formerly seated appreciably more people; seats have been removed from both transepts, from several places in the north aisle, from the Baptistry at the west end of the south aisle and from the back of the nave on the south side.

The Lady Chapel is situated in the south transept; Shortly after the new High Altar was installed in 1911, the old High Altar was placed in the south transept on a low wooden platform and a Lady Chapel was constituted. That this Chapel was first known as the Lady Chapel is still evidenced by the letters which appear on shields at the top of the dossal curtain: "B.V." (Blessed Virgin): "M" (Mary): "M.D." (Mater Dei — Mother of God). In 1914 or 1915 certain improvements were made.

At this time, four maiden ladies, the Misses Hearn, lived in North Crescent and did a lot of work in the Church, as well as making vestments, stoles, altar frontals, etc. The last thing made by Miss Maud Hearn was the present St. Michael's banner.

In December 1931, after the deaths of two of these ladies, the other two and their brother (who was a Priest) gave the wainscot oak altar, with carved linenfold panels, which is now in the Lady Chapel, in memory of their deceased sisters. The old altar (the original high altar) was then moved to the north transept.

In November 1938, the wooden platform on which the Lady Chapel altar stands was slightly enlarged and the Communion Rails (the present oak ones) were moved to the edge of the enlarged platform: also a new curtain was provided for the Tabernacle.

Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament was first introduced at St. Michael's Church sometime between 1932 and 1938: an oak Tabernacle was provided for this purpose on the shelf behind the Lady Chapel altar: it had no metal lining.

In 1941, the present Tabernacle was purchased. It consists of a steel safe 14" x 12" x 10" with repoussé bronze double doors; encased in oak and lined with cedar wood and silk.

This Chapel, which was formerly known as the Lady Chapel, is now frequently referred to as the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

The present dorsal curtain and the six silver candlesticks were provided between 1950 and 1956.

The crucifix behind the Lady Chapel Altar is unusual and interesting. It was purchased by the Rev. Alan W. Barker, who is believed to have obtained it from "an old junk shop" near the Black Horse Inn at Gossards Ford. Its age, origin and history are unknown.

This Crucifix consists of a black Wooden cross, overlaid with a thin silver cross which bears an image of Our Lord; at the base of the silver cross is an image of the Virgin Mary and Child.

There are proposals at the present time to move the Lady Chapel altar further to the north, in order that a new doorway may be cut in the east wall of the south transept, to give access to the proposed Church Room, which is to be built during the Centenary Year (1967).

St. George's Chapel is located in the north transept. The altar [*sic*] is the original High Altar, which was first moved to the south transept, and later to its present position in 1931/2. Apart from the altar and the wooden platform on which it stands, St. George's Chapel was furnished between 1950 and 1956.

The Font originally stood near the centre of the west end of the Church; somewhat to the south of the centre and just clear of the west door. In September 1897 it was moved to its present position in the south-west corner of the Church.

#### The Lectern

The present light oak lectern is of recent origin and was presented to the Church "In memory of Mary Bancroft RYLE 1880 to 1956".

The Church was formerly furnished with a brass lectern, which was purchased out of funds raised by St. Michael's Guild and was in use down to mid-1950. Some time between August 1950 and September 1951 this brass lectern was removed. The Church was without a lectern from 1951 until the present oak lectern was presented in 1956.

#### The Clock

Through the Work and energy of a Miss Caudwell, who had for some time been anxious to obtain a clock for St. Michael's Church, nearly £50 had been subscribed by April 1887 towards the estimated cost of £61.



The installation of the clock was completed and it was set going, with a short Dedicatory Service, on Wednesday, 10th August 1887.

The mechanism of the clock was supported by a small gallery, which can still be seen over the west door of the Church. It had an exterior dial, which is still visible high up on the west gable; also a second dial in the centre of the gallery, inside the Church. It struck the hours.

In 1897 the clock gallery, which had formerly obstructed the west door of the Church, was raised: also the clock, which had not been keeping good time, was given some attention. In October 1898, however, the clock had stopped; At an unknown date, probably about 1935, this clock which had then been standing idle for a number of years and had deteriorated, was, with the exception of the dial on the outside of the Church and the gallery, removed.

#### Stained Glass Windows etc.

There are 5 stained glass Windows in the Church; also a set of Stations of the Cross; two other pictures, and two banners.

#### East Window

This Window, which is by Messrs. Lavers and Barrand, was installed between June 1873 and April 1875, at a cost of about £80; the whole of which was raised, by voluntary donation, by November 1876.

The Church being dedicated to St. Michael and All Angels, it was thought appropriate that the subjects represented by this Window should be taken from the thoughts suggested by the Collect for the Annunciation.

"We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts that, as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son, Jesus Christ, by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought unto the glory of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen".

The three principal lights of the window contain representations of the Annunciation, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The circular light (above the centre light containing the Crucifixion) contains a representation of the Son of God on the throne, the right hand raised to bless and the left hand holding the earth; on either side are angels offering adoration. The tracery below is filled with heads of St. Michael and St. Gabriel.

The centre light, the circular light and the tracery with the stained glass filling them, were installed in April 1873 at a cost of about £40, which had by then been subscribed. The stained glass in the two side lights, representing the Annunciation and the Resurrection, were added in March or April 1875.

#### S.E. Chancel Window

This Window contains two lights. That on the left contains a representation of St. Michael, in memory of Sydney Jervis Hammet who died 16th November 1873, and Ernest Lewis Hammet, 26th September 1875. The glass in the right hand light bears the figure of St. Gabriel; it was given by Mr. C. Alfred Pryce in memory of his wife, Ellen Pryce, who died 24th March 1884, aged 28: it was made in the studio of Messrs. Burlison and Grylls.

#### S.W. Chancel Window

This is also a two light Window which contains representations of St. John and St. Stephen. It was designed and executed by Messrs. Clayton and Bell of London in 1882 at a cost of about £55, which was provided by the voluntary subscriptions of the congregations of St. Helen's and St. Michael's Churches, as a memorial to Emma Bligh, born 15th September 1833, died 27th December 1881, the wife of the Rev. the Hon. Henry Bligh, a former Vicar (1874 to 1878).

#### South Baptistry Window

This is a two light Window with a circular light over. The two main lights contain representations of Faith and of Hope, while the circular light contains that of Charity.

It was erected in memory of Alfred Norman Perrin, who died in Italy on 30th October 1918, aged 27; and of Clement Edward Perrin, who died in France on 14th August 1916, aged 22. These two young men were sons of a former verger of St. Michael's.

#### West Baptistry Window

This window, which is a single light window, contains Christ blessing little children and is in memory of Mary Jane Challenor, who died 4th January 1928, aged 67.

#### Pictures

There are two framed pictures in the Church, which hang on the west walls of the two transepts. That in the south transept is a copy of Raphael's Madonna de San Sisto, and was given by friends, in memory of Charles Badcock, who died in 1905.

#### Stations of the Cross

A full set of Stations of the Cross hangs on the Walls of the nave. Of these, number 9 was a memorial to the late Mr. Perrin, while numbers 13 and 14 were purchased out of moneys subscribed for a memorial to Miss Hearn. These three were hung on 20th January 1945. The remainder were obtained subsequently.

## Memorial Tablets

A memorial of some local interest will be found on the south wall of the Chancel. This is a brass tablet which bears the inscription "In memory of Thomas Bowles, Priest, who died 12<sup>th</sup> January 1899. He offered the Holy Sacrifice for the last time at this altar on the preceding New Year's Day. May he rest in Peace". The Rev. Thomas Bowles was the third son of Thomas Bowles of Milton, Berks, Armiger. He graduated from the Queen's College, Oxford, in 1847, was ordained deacon in 1848, and priest 1849. After various curacies, including Wantage, All Saints, Clifton, and Wallingford, he became in 1875 Rector of East Hendred. He resigned in 1890 and came to live in Abingdon. He was the younger brother of J.S. Bowles, Chairman of the Abingdon Board of Guardians and County Bench, who died in 1884.

## The Organ

When the Church was consecrated in 1867 it had no organ. During part of 1867 a harmonium had been hired and in May 1868 a harmonium was purchased for £12. In October 1870 an organ, the property of the Rev. G.H. and Mrs. H.H. Swinny, was lent to the Church for 2 or 3 years, and appears to have remained until after Christmas 1876. A strenuous drive was opened in October 1876 to raise funds for an organ, which it was then estimated would cost not less than £300. By February 1877 £200.13.5½d had been raised and on the third of the following month the work was put in hand, in the hope that it would be completed before St. James' Day 1879, but delay was occasioned and extra expense incurred by the need to relay the Stonesfield's slates with which the roof of the Chancel was covered.

The new organ was brought into use at a series of Special Services on Wednesday, 12th September 1877, which included Choral Holy Communion at 7.30 a.m., First Evensong at 3.30 p.m., at which the sermon was preached by a former Vicar, the Ven Archdeacon Pott, and the anthem was "The Hallelujah Chorus", and Second Evensong at 7.30 p.m. at which The Rev. A.T. Lloyd (Vicar of Aylesbury) was the preacher, and the anthem was "The Lord is King". The Rev. Alfred Pott, B.D. had been Vicar of Abingdon from 1868, when he succeeded the Rev. Nathaniel Dodson, M.A. (who, it will be remembered, had been Vicar throughout the years of the founding of St. Michael's). After each Service an organ recital was given by T.W. Dodds, Esq., Mus.Bac., organist of The Queen's College, Oxford. The organ, which is still in use, was built by Charles Martin of Oxford. The total cost of the organ and of roof repairs was £488.3.4d of which all but £2.4.1d had been collected by mid-November 1877.

An electric pump for blowing the organ was added "in gratitude for the devoted services of Edward Fletcher as organist from 1903 to 1930".

In September 1928 an appeal was launched for funds to carry out a thorough overhaul of the organ, "which had not been properly seen to for over 25 years". The total sum required — £65.15.0d - had been subscribed by the end of the following month and the work was carried out.

## Lighting

At the time that gas stoves for heating were installed in December 1868 and November 1870, gas lighting was also installed in the Church; brackets for gas lights being fitted to each pillar.

In September 1889 two brass standards, each bearing 12 lights, were placed in the Sanctuary at a total cost of £42, by St. Michael's Guild.

In 1899 certain improvements were made in the lighting at a cost of about £20, but it was not until 1941 that the Church went over from gas to electricity.

In 1941 electric light was installed in accordance with a scheme prepared by Messrs. Holophane Ltd. of Westminster and under the direction of Mr. John Herbert, electrical engineer, of Botley Road, Oxford. It consisted of 14 pendant fittings in the Nave, 8 reflector fittings (4 in the Chancel and 4 in the Transepts) and one tubular desk fitting in the pulpit. The work was completed by Michaelnas [*sic*] 1941 at a total cost of £139, the whole of which was paid off by Easter 1942.

## Heating

In December 1868, just under two years after the Church was first brought into use, it was partially warmed and lighted by the installation of gas stoves and lights at a cost of £27. During November 1870 additional gas stoves were installed and gas lights throughout the greater length of the building, which are said to have made the Church much drier and warmer.

In the autumn of 1879 the stoves were found to be in bad repair and the iron piping (presumably chimney pipes) was in need of renewal at a considerable cost. Steps were at once taken to raise funds and in December 1879 the Vicar (Rev. William C. Gibbs) addressed a letter to the town generally, in which he stated that £50 had already been raised, and appealed for the estimated balance of £70; "as more than half the seats in the Church are free and unappropriated, and the congregation is mainly composed of our poorer brethren".

On account of the inefficiency of the old system of heating and the heavy cost of necessary repairs, a decision had been taken to instal a new "system of warming" to be supplied by Messrs. Haydon & Son of Trowbridge, Wilts. at an estimated cost of £79, plus about £40 for masons' work. This was put in hand in December 1879 and completed by February 1880, when it is recorded that the thermometer at the west end of the Church (furthest from the heating apparatus) registered 50 after Morning Service and 56 at Evensong. In order to make the new "warming apparatus" efficient, it had been found necessary to carry out some repairs to windows and roofs. The whole cost, including these repairs, came to £163.4.0d which, with the exception of a loan of £20 repayable over 20 years, had been raised by the end of 1880.

The system of heating which was installed in 1880 involved the building of a furnace house and chimney on the south side of the Church. In this a large coke burning furnace was installed from which heat rose up and entered the Church by way

of two iron grids some 7 feet from the floor; one in the south wall of the Chancel and the other in the east wall of the South Transept.

On 19th October 1950 a Committee of ladies was appointed to organise a Christmas Bazaar to raise money for a heating fund. At a meeting of St. Michael's Committee held on 14th November 1950, the Rev. Leon Janes reported that he had obtained on [*sic*] "unofficial estimate of £300 from a firm of heating engineers" and asked that an early order be placed to ensure completion of the proposed new system of heating by Christmas. This work was carried out. It consisted of the replacement of the 1880 furnace, which was encased in a mass of concrete, by a furnace of modern design, also designed to burn solid fuel, from which heat entered the Church via the same grids.

The new furnace of 1950 was not a great success. In March 1951 it was reported as being very costly to operate and that it had burnt a ton of coke in a week. In February 1962 a report was made to the effect that it was not an efficient system of heating the Church, that it was dirty and that the furnace would not last beyond that present season.

In May 1962 the National Industrial Fuel Efficiency Service was consulted as to the best system of heating to use. In September of the same year the Parochial Church Council approved the installation of central heating with an oil-fired boiler at a cost of about £2,000 and resolved that a faculty be applied for. Work was started in February 1963, in one of the severest winters in living memory, and completed rather over a month later.

This new heating installation was paid for in part out of reserves held on account of the Church, and partly from a loan which was completely repaid within 2 or 3 years. It consists of a modern oil-fired boiler, controlled both by time switches and thermostatically, from which hot water is fed to radiators and fan convectors, which are located throughout the Church. The old furnace house at the S.E. corner of the Church was converted into a boiler house and a storage tank for fuel oil was placed beside it. The two old iron grids which allowed hot air to enter the Church (and incidentally a good deal of dirt and smoke) were removed and the openings in the walls of the Church were closed.

### The Services

When St. Michael's Church was consecrated in January 1867, the Parish Church of St. Helen was sadly in need of attention. Not only was the interior in need of restoration – including the removal of the galleries - but the main structure - the walls and roof – were in a state of "extreme delapidation". After much consideration over the course of several years, St. Helen's was closed after Trinity Sunday (4th June) 1871 and the work of restoration was commenced on Monday, 3rd July 1871. The Parish Church was not re-opened for services until Wednesday, 30th July 1873. This must have had a marked effect on the extent to which the new Church of St. Michael's was used during its early years.

During its first two years, Holy Communion appears to have been celebrated at St. Michael's on two Sundays of each month and on the major Saints' Days at 8 a.m., and

also once a month at 11 a.m. From Easter 1869 the Celebrations were increased to every Sunday at 8 a.m. and on Holy Days, as well as at 11 or 11.30 a.m. on one Sunday each month. Other Sunday services at this date were Matins, Evensong and an afternoon service every Sunday. As from October 1868 there had been Evensong daily at 5 p.m.

Between the date of its consecration and the re-opening of St. Helen's Church, the Bishop held four Confirmations in St. Michael's. On these occasions the numbers confirmed from the Parish of St. Helen, Abingdon, were as follows :-

On 12th February 1869	...	...	170	(70	male.	100	female)
On 31st December 1870	...	...	118	(49	"	69	"")
On 13th December 1871	...	...	128				
On 11th December 1872	...	...	104				

A total of 520 over the four years.

With the re-opening of St. Helen's, the Sunday Celebrations of Holy Communion at St. Michael's were, as from August 1873, reduced to once a month at 8 a.m. and once a month after Matins; by early in 1874 however, 8 a.m. Holy Communion had been resumed on every Sunday, except once a month when it was celebrated after Matins.

It may be of interest in these days of shorter working hours, to note that on St. Michael's Day 1875, there was a Celebration of Holy Communion at 5 a.m. "for those whose business would render attendance impossible at a later hour". This was followed by a Choral Celebration at 8 a.m., Matins at 11 a.m. and Choral Evensong at 7.30 p.m. The same pattern was followed in 1876 and 1877. The 5 a.m. Celebration on St. Michael's Day was revived in 1882 to 1886.

In 1884 a Celebration of Holy Communion was commenced in March on each Thursday at 8 a.m., and in July an extra Sunday Celebration was introduced at 7 a.m. on the third Sunday of the month in addition to that after Matins.

In April of the following year the mid-day Celebration was separated from Matins and instead was made into a separate service commencing at 12.15 p.m., also the 7 a.m. Celebration was moved from the third to the fourth Sunday and an additional 8 a.m. Celebration was introduced, thus providing Holy Communion at 8 a.m. every Sunday and Thursday.

As from St. Luke's Day 1888 a Choral Celebration was introduced on Saints' Days at 9.30 a.m.

As previously noted, Evensong had been said daily in St. Michael's Church at 5 p.m. from October 1868. In February 1886 this became a daily Choral Evensong, and in October 1887 the time was changed to 6 p.m. daily. In July 1890 a second Evensong was introduced on Wednesdays.

The numbers of Easter Communicants towards the end of last century may be of some interest :-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total for Parish</u>	<u>Total at St Michael's</u>
1892	654	(not known)
1893	705	237
1894	694	239
1895	690	240
1896	755	256
1897	740	(not known)

As from March 1897, Matins was said at 10.30 a.m. followed by a Choral Celebration at 11 a.m. (changed to 11.15 in July 1897) on every Sunday: also Holy Communion was celebrated at 8 a.m. on Monday, Thursday and Saturday at St. Michael's which, with celebrations at other Churches, provided a daily celebration. In June 1897 the Weekday celebrations were increased to every day except Wednesdays, and in November of that year to daily at 8 a.m. and also on certain days at 7.30 a.m.

In April 1897 the congregations were said to be "getting so good, especially on a Sunday evening", that it might be necessary to increase the seating accommodation. In October of the same year, the Font was moved into the south aisle, thus affording a considerable gain of space for seats in the Nave.

1927 appears to have been the year in which the practise of Reserving the Sacrament was commenced at St. Michael's Church.

In 1929 the English Hymnal was substituted for – or partially substituted for – Hymns Ancient and Modern, which had formerly been used.

Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament was introduced between 1932 and 1938. [*Note contradiction with 1927 above.*]

The use of incense is believed to date from about the year 1940.

### St. Michael's Guild

In 1886 the Guild of St. Michael was started by the then Vicar, The Rev. R.C.F. Griffith, with the object of providing, by varying monthly payments (from one penny and upwards a month) from its members, for the decoration and adornment of the Church. Membership cards were issued to all persons who undertook to make monthly payments and join in this work.

The first object undertaken by the Guild was the provision of a Processional Cross, which was purchased during 1887 for £13.10.0d. By the end of that year there were 77 members of the Guild, who had contributed £23.2.8d and the Guild had embarked on its second object, namely, Mural Decorations of the Chancel walls, for which designs had then recently been received from Mr. Drake of Exeter.

By the end of 1889 the membership of the Guild had increased to 111. In September of that year, the Guild provided the Church with "two beautiful brass Standards of twelve lights each" which were placed in the Sanctuary. The lights were

gas lights: the cost was £42. The Guild also provided a new Altar frontal at a cost of £5.

At the Annual Meeting of the Guild on 23rd October 1890, Mr. T.E. Graham, the Secretary, stated that the numbers were about 140. In addition to a Processional Cross and two Sanctuary Standards, the Guild had by then also provided the Church with a Lectern: these three articles are described as being "all of the best brass and worthy offerings for the glory and beauty of the Sanctuary".

In November 1891, the membership was 116. The guild provided a new Sanctuary carpet for St. Michael's Day of that year; it was purchased at Messrs. Watts & Co. of Baker Street, London, and was one of Mr. Bodley's designs.

After these five years of most useful work, the Guild became practically defunct until October 1896 when it was revived by Miss Barnes, Miss Britten and Miss Payne in a meeting held at the Vicarage.

By September of the following year, they had enrolled 95 members and the Guild had presented a new Banner of St. Michael to the Church. The figure of St. Michael was painted on canvas by "a lady in Bologna, Italy".

In 1898 the Guild paid for the painting of the altar rails, an altar frontal and candlesticks for use at funerals, and in addition contributed £10.10.0d towards improvements to the lighting of the Church.

In 1911 the Guild undertook the task of finding the necessary funds to pay for the new High Altar. In fact, £10 was given by an anonymous donor leaving £53.7.10d, which was found by the Guild.

After the 194-18 War the Guild raised the funds to pay for new oak choir stalls on the South side of the Chancel and for altar rails.

During recent years the Guild has provided the Church with various ornaments, such as vestments.

### "Priests in Charge"

As indicated in the section of these notes which deals with the Consecration of the Church, St. Michael's is a Chapel of Ease to St. Helen's: the Vicar of the Parish is consequently in charge of St. Michael's. For a number of years, it has, however, been convenient to give one of the Curates special responsibility for St. Michael's, and to arrange that he shall normally officiate there. This Curate (at present the Rev. Dr. Gordon Roe) is, and has for the last 25 to 30 years, been commonly known as "Priest in charge of St. Michael's". The practise developed gradually. The earliest date at which one of the Curates can be said to have officiated at the majority of the services at St. Michael's is about 1914. The first Curate who appears to have been appointed, with the intention, at the time of his appointment, that he should officiate at substantially all the Services at St. Michael's, appears to have been the Rev. J.J. Williams in 1938.



Below is the list of the Curates who can in any sense be regarded as "Priests in charge of St. Michael's" :-

Sept. 1914 – Feb. 1920:	Alan W. Barker, M.A. (Cantab).
March 1920 – Dec. 1929:	John K. Sitwell, M.A. (Cantab).
Dec, 1929 – Feb. 1932:	Thomas P. Weatherhog
March 1932 – May 1935:	Ralph O. Philips, M.A. (Cantab).
Oct. 1935 – June 1938:	Eric F. Pearson, A.K.C.
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Aug. 1938 – Jan. 1944 :	J.J. Williams, M.A. (Cantab).
Jan. 1944 – July 1950:	John S.E. Harris, M.A. (Oxon).
Oct. 1950 – 1956 :	Leonard G. Janes, M.A. (Oxon).
1956 – Jan. 1961:	P. Peter Symes, B.A. (Leeds)
March 1961 –	W. Gordon Roe, M.A., D.Phil. (Oxon).

The Vicars of the Parish from the foundation of St. Michael's Church to the present date have been as under :-

1824 – 1867:	Nathaniel Dodson, M.A.
1868 – 1874:	Alfred Pott, B.D.
1874 – 1878:	Henry Bligh, the Hon
1878 – 1884:	William C. Gibbs, M.A.
1884 – 1896:	R.C.F. Griffiths, M.A.
1896 – 1900:	Wentworth Watson, M.A.
1900 – 1914:	Hubert T. Maitland, M.A.
1914 – 1924:	H.A. Kennedy, M.A.
1924 – 1926:	C.S. Fleet, M.A., M.C.
1926 – 1946:	R.C. MacKeown, M.A.
1946 – 1951:	Thomas H. Liddiard, M.A.
1951 – 1959:	Arthur E. Hayton, M.A.
1959 –	John H.S. Dixon

In 1956 the dwelling house known as 6, Park Road, was purchased from the Rev. J.K. Sitwell for £1,500 plus the Vendors' proper legal costs. The money was provided by interest free loans from members of St. Michael's congregation, repayable within 10 years. At a Special Meeting of the Parochial Church Council on 2nd July 1956 it was resolved that the property be vested in the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance as custodian trustees and that the house "shall always be available for the Priest who for the time being is placed in charge of St. Michael's Church".