

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church

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St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church Grayshott Catholicism in early Grayshott

The building of St. Joseph's was commenced in 1910 and the church was consecrated on the Feast of St. Anne on 26th July 1911. However, the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were followed in the area for many years before the foundation of St Joseph's and the history of the church is centred around the Vertue family and in particular Mrs Ada Vertue. Ada Vertue was born Ada Caroline Hitchcock in Hornsey, Middlesex, in June 1855. The 1881 census shows her to be living in Kenwyn, Cornwall, together with her brother Henry who at the time was Priest Curate in charge of St. George's, Truro. In 1887, she married Charles Erskine Vertue in Hastings and they moved to Grayshott to live at *The Court*, Headley Road, Grayshott, which they had acquired from Edward l'Anson and others by a Deed dated 6th April 1889. Formerly called *Heather Lodge* and later to be named *The Convent of Our Lady of the Cenacle, Heather Lodge* had been built by Edward l'Anson in 1864. Mr. Vertue, who was a Government Inspector of Schools for more than thirty years and who also held the appointment of Honorary Chamberlain to Pope Pius X, had been received into the Catholic Church in May 1890 by Father Galway, SJ. In the early days, the Vertues attended Mass in a small Chapel within the house of a nearby neighbour, Sir Archibald Keppel Macdonald, a fairly difficult horse drawn drive along a rough road over the Common. Sir Archibald was the son of Sir James Macdonald, Bart., Lord of the Manor of Ludshott 1825-1832, who had acquired the old Ludshott manor house in 1826. Sir James had an additional wing built to the side of the house and called his new home *Woolmer Lodge*. After his death in 1832, he was succeeded by his son Sir Archibald Keppel Macdonald although at the time he was only eight years old. After service in the Royal Scots Fusiliers as an officer and then as Equerry to the Duke of Sussex, Sir Archibald took up residence at *Woolmer Lodge* in 1849, eventually to become High Sheriff of Hampshire in 1865. Following his second marriage, he built a Catholic chapel in *Woolmer Lodge*, dedicated to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception and it was here that the Vertues attended Mass. *Woolmer Lodge stands south of Ludshott Common, at a point approximately halfway between St. Joseph's and Bramshott, now approached along Woolmer Lane, Bramshott. It has recently been redeveloped into private residential apartments. After Sir Archibald's death, he was succeeded by his son Sir Archibald John Macdonald Bt. who died in 1919, after which the title of the Lordship of the Manor of Ludshott was purchased by Mrs. Charlotte Lyndon, transferred upon her death to her husband Dr. Lyndon and upon Dr. Lyndon's death it was left to the National Trust.* In November 1890, the Bishop of Portsmouth, Mrg. Vertue, (a namesake only and not directly related), came to the village to give Charles Vertue Confirmation and whilst in the area, the Bishop decided to say Mass at Sir Archibald's. Following a tiring drive each way, he later suggested to the Vertues that future Mass could be held once a week in *The Court*. Unfortunately, two weeks later and whilst the Vertues were staying in London, there was a devastating fire at *The Court* and the building was almost totally destroyed. However it was decided to rebuild the house and upon hearing of these plans, the Bishop suggested that a Chapel be built within the new house in order for a daily Mass to be held. In the meantime, for the next two summers, the Vertues lived in the Coachman's and Gardner's cottages and Mass was held in a chapel in the only remaining room of *The Court*, known as "the outside room". Bishop Vertue said the first Mass there on the Feast of Our Lady of the Snow in 1891. Arrangements were made for the Premonstratentian Fathers of Farnborough to serve the Chapel and this duty was later taken over by the Franciscans from the Novitiate at Chilworth. Initially, the congregation consisted of Mr. & Mrs. Vertue and three servants, but this was soon increased when a few villagers from the surrounding area, including Haslemere, Shottermill and Wishanger, started to attend Mass. Should any member present wish to attend Confession, the Chapel was cleared and the congregation had to wait outside for the necessary period. Eventually, the new building of *The Court* was completed and on June 26th 1895, the Feast of St. John and St. Paul, a Father Gallway blessed the new Chapel and Bishop Vertue said the first Mass. The Franciscans, mainly Father John, Father Fidelis and Father Thaddeus, continued to serve until the arrival of Father Jerome O'Callaghan from Ireland. Under his care, the congregation gradually grew up to thirty in number but Father O'Callaghan served for a relatively short term before returning to Ireland where he died from consumption.

The building of St. Joseph's Church

With the increase of the population in Grayshott and the surrounding area, resulting from the development of the village and the introduction of hotels and boarding houses, so the Roman Catholic population increased, particularly in the summer months. A local census taken of the Catholic population living in the neighbourhood on 2nd March 1902 revealed that there were ten males, twenty-two females and nineteen children, the latter being those that had not taken their first communion. Following the death of Mr Vertue, who died on 5th July 1904, Mrs. Ada Vertue spent a lot of time away from the village and considered leaving it altogether. However, during this period, she resolved not to give up *The Court* until there was a church to take its place. Over one hundred people attended Mass in the Chapel on Easter Sunday 1909, with the congregation not only in the Chapel itself but also standing in adjacent rooms. It was soon after this service that Father John, one of the Franciscans who had previously served the congregation, visited Mrs. Vertue and this visit and subsequent discussions led to the decision to build a permanent church. The Bishops consent was sought and granted and Mrs. Vertue allocated land within the grounds of *The Court* for a church, presbytery and churchyard. St. Joseph's was subsequently built and consecrated by Rt. Reverend W.J. Cotter, Bishop of Portsmouth, on the Feast of St. Anne, 26th July 1911. **The Consecration Ceremony** The reports of the day describe an impressive ceremony attended by all the stately ceremonial of the Roman Catholic Church. The Bishop was assisted by Father Harvey in the presence of priests from local parishes and other regions of the Diocese, local dignities and a large congregation. The ceremony had begun the previous evening when the Vigil of the Martyrs was kept. At 7.30am on Wednesday 26th July 1911, the Bishop ordered for candles to be lit before the twelve crosses on the wall of the church. A procession of attendant priests and the congregation, led outside by the Bishop, walked around the church and the Bishop blessed the outer walls. Upon return to the inside of the church, the seven Penetential Psalms were sung and the inner walls and the Holy Water were blessed. The Bishop then wrote the first and last letters of the Greek and Latin alphabet on the floor in the sign of a cross, the Gregorian water was blessed and the consecration of the altar commenced, anointing the Cross and sprinkling it seven times with the Gregorian Water. The Relics were carried around the church, brought to the altar and then placed in the sepulchre, which had previously been blessed with Holy Water together with the vestments and other items used on the altar. The consecration ceremony was followed by High Mass and afterwards the visitors were entertained by Mrs. Vertue. At 4.00pm, after Pontifical Benediction, members of the congregation were entertained to tea and introduced to the Bishop. Amongst gifts donated to the church were an old Spanish Crucifix, Limerick Lace altar frontals and a Sanctuary lamp. The Vestments had all been previously made by ladies of the congregation. **The Church of St Joseph** There appear to be few records relating to the actual building of the church or its earliest years, possibly because it remained in Mrs. Vertue's ownership until the conveyance of the land of one acre, two roods and thirty-eight perches, together with the church and presbytery, to the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Diocesan on 3rd October 1917. (A Foundation Mass has been said for Ada Vertue since 1912).

St. Joseph's Church

c. 1922 The Graves of Mrs Ada Vertue

Father Harnett & Father Harvey

St. Joseph's church, now a Grade 2 listed building, was designed by the Scottish architect Frederick Arthur Walters (1849-1931), who also designed the later enlargement of *The Cenacle*. He was a noted architect of the Gothic revival who designed over fifty Catholic churches and buildings, including Buckfast Abbey, Ealing Abbey, St John's Seminary, Womersley and the Holy Ghost Franciscan Friary at Chilworth, from which the Franciscan Monks came to serve in Grayshott. He was the architect responsible for restoration work and the building of a new clergy home and a new chapel, St Josephs, at St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, London, at the end of the nineteenth century. Built in the Gothic Style, St. Josephs has stone walls and two buttresses on the north side, a tiled roof, parallel lower roofs above both the north and south chapels and a stone bell turret over the chancel, all in the Perpendicular, 15th century, style. Windows are in the Perpendicular style with cusped panels, some of which are with square heads and some with arched heads. Locally sourced Bath stone was used for the windows, doorways and other free-stone work. The nave has four bays and a porch on the north side. Internally, the church has a wooden barrel ceiling over the chancel and side chapels. Although it has a relatively plain interior, there is a beautiful tripartite traceried stained glass window above the High Altar, depicting Mary with the baby Jesus at its centre, St. Joseph to the left and the Mother of Mary, to the

right. There is an elaborate stone reredos below the east window and a Lectern and octagonal Font of carved alabaster, the wooden pews are thought to be original. To the right of the High Altar is the Sacred Heart Chapel, a later addition to the church, to which an Altar was added in 1939 and to the left is the Lady Chapel, the altar of which is believed to be the original altar of the Chapel within *The Court*. The statues of St. Swithin and St Edmond of Canterbury stand in canopied niches either side of the reredos. On the walls around the church are the fourteen tablets of the Station Of The Cross, depicting the journey of Jesus to the Crucifixion. The contractors for the building of the church were Messrs. Frank Milton & Sons of Witley. The altar, font and lectern were the work of Messrs. Earp & Hobbs of Lambeth. Originally, the church was built with a plain glass window above the High Altar. However, following the death of Mrs. Vertue in 1934, a Memorial Fund was established under the chairmanship of Father Harvey and as a result, the stained glass window was installed and dedicated to her memory.

Interior of St. Joseph's Church 2010

The East Window

Baptisms are recorded to have taken place in the parish from 1901, the first ten of which were in the Chapel at *The Court*. Records show that burials took place in St. Joseph's cemetery from 1919 although they may have occurred from an earlier date. In the churchyard are the graves of Canadian soldiers from the first World War (see below), ten Sisters from the *Convent of the Cenacle* and also those of Canon Louis Harvey, Father Patrick Hartnett, Father Pat O'Donnell, former priests of the Parish and Ada Vertue. Also in the churchyard, on the south side of the Sacred Heart Chapel, is a large statue of Christ which was formerly at *The Convent of the Cenacle*. Following the consecration of St. Joseph's, Mrs. Vertue continued with her husband's work of inviting sick priests to stay and rest at *The Court*. This led her to consider converting *The Court* into a House of Retreat but this proved impracticable and so she approached the Reverend Mother D'Angliano of *Our Lady of the Cenacle* with a view to giving *The Court* to the Order. This offer was duly accepted and on 26th April 1913, *The Court* was handed over to the Order and thereafter became known as *The Covent of Our Lady of the Cenacle*, with Nuns in residence until shortly before it was demolished in 1999 to be replaced with residential housing. Following the handing over of *The Cenacle* to the Order, Mrs. Vertue moved to *St. Anne's* in Headley Road, Grayshott. (During the First World War, the *Cenacle* was used as a military hospital--see separate Archive article-- and during the Second World War, it was used as a military educational centre where resident nuns taught foreign languages to members of the armed forces).

Soon after the death of her husband, Mrs. Vertue had entered the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, later to become Provincial Superior. The Society, first established in England in 1846, is devoted to serving the poor and needy. She had always been active in many aspects of Grayshott village life, with a particular interest in the Grayshott Band of Mercy, (see separate Archive Article) and serving on the committee of the Grayshott Nursing Association.

Ada Caroline Vertue died on 28th November 1934 aged seventy-nine and is buried in St. Joseph's Churchyard.

Ada Caroline Vertue

The Priests of St. Joseph's The first resident priest in Grayshott was Father Louis Harvey who came to the village in 1906. A few months before he arrived, Louis Harvey had been diagnosed to be terminally ill with a life expectancy of only three months and a decision was taken by the Catholic Church to ordain him into the priesthood earlier than would have been usual. He was then sent to end his days as chaplain to Mrs. Vertue in Grayshott. However, Father Harvey's health gradually improved and he was appointed Grayshott Parish Priest following the building of St. Joseph's in 1911. Here he remained in office until his death on 21st December 1958 aged seventy-seven. Louis Harvey was appointed Canon in 1952 and is buried in the churchyard of St. Joseph's to the east of the Church. The Assistant Priest during the latter part of Canon Harvey's term was Reverend Kevin Gallagher who came to the village from Winchester in 1957. Following the death of Canon Harvey, Father Patrick Hartnett, who had been Parish Priest in Christchurch, was appointed Parish Priest of Grayshott and came to St. Joseph's in January 1959. Father Hartnett remained in office in Grayshott until his death on 21st. December 1983 aged sixty-four and is buried alongside Canon Harvey. Following the death of Father Hartnett, Father Patrick O'Donnell was Priest of the Parish until he retired in 1995, although he continued to help with the ministry of the parish until his death at the age of eighty-eight in August

2008. Father Cronin came to the parish after Father O'Donnell's retirement and was followed some six years later by Father Bigwood. The present Priest is Reverend Eddie Richer of The Sacred Heart, Bordon assisted by the Deacon, Reverend Mr. Stephen Melhuish. **Canadian War Graves** In the churchyard of St. Joseph' Church can be seen the graves of ninety-five Canadian soldiers who died locally during the First World War, one of which is inscribed to Reverend Ivor Daniel, Chaplain to the Forces. (Photographs of each grave and full details of the soldier can be viewed on www.wakefieldfhs.co.uk and by going to the link to Grayshott St. Joseph). Also in the churchyard and alongside Headley Road, is a Memorial Crucifix dedicated on 22nd June 1919 to the Canadian soldiers who died in the hospital (*The Covent of the Cenacle*) during the period 1914-1918. **Jubilee Celebrations 1961** The 50th anniversary of the consecration of St. Joseph's Church on 26th July 1961, was celebrated in the presence of the Right Reverend J. H. King, Archbishop of Portsmouth. A Solemn Mass was sung at 6.30pm by Father Hartnett, assisted by Rev. G Dwyer of Portsmouth and Rev. M. Christy of Southampton, who were Deacon and Sub-Deacon respectively. The Mass was followed by the Pontifical Benediction.

The Archbishop was assisted by the Very Reverend Canon R. Scantlebury of Havant and Canon J. Murtagh of Bournemouth. The choir was under the direction of Father K Gallagher. Some sixteen clergy from the local and wider reaches of the Diocese were also present amongst the two hundred attendees. Canon Scantlebury- of T.V. fame at the time- gave the sermon, giving a brief historical account of the Roman Catholic Church in England and its expansion since the Reformation. Earlier in the day, Father Hartnett had entertained the Archbishop and clergy to lunch at the Sally Lunn restaurant in Hindhead. Following the service, a sherry party was held in the Parish Hall. The event was summed up as having been a very enjoyable day. **St. Joseph's Altar Society** The original Altar Society was established to raise funds to cover the costs of providing necessities for the Altar and the Sanctuary, such as Altar clothes, linen purificators and lavabos, silk chasuble, copes etc. and the provision of flowers candles and wine. No records exist for the original Society but are available for the period 1936 up to 1958. On 10th March 1936, a meeting was held in Apley House, the home of Major and Mrs. P.T. Wessel, at which it was decided to re-form the Society and rename it the St. Joseph's Altar Society. A Committee was formed and a letter written to all Roman Catholics of the parish in order to raise funds. It was proposed that an annual subscription should be paid, donations collected and a Box of Offering be placed in the church porch. Work meetings were held on a monthly basis in order to repair and to make vestments and Altar linen. Eleven sewing parties were held in the first year with an average six attendees. At the end of the first year, the accounts showed a balance of £15.7s.0d. with income amounting to £38.7s.8d., the main costs relating to printing, flowers and altar wine. It was noted that the nuns of the *Cenacle* had given valuable help and advice to the sewing parties. Expenditure in the second year included the provision of the following: Two Albs-£3.13s.6d., Twelve boy's Cottas-£2.14s.0d., Six boy's and Two men's Cassocks-£6.19s.0d., and seven pairs of boy's plimsols-15s.10d. White art-silk vestment costs amounted to £5.19s.10d. During the period of the second world war, working members of the committee were called upon for various forms of war work and much of the work of the Society was undertaken by the nuns of the *Cenacle*. **Society of St. Vincent de Paul** This world wide Society, founded in 1833 by a group of Catholic students, is devoted to the care and personal assistance of those in need and bringing help to the lonely and the suffering. The Grayshott and Headley Society voluntarily ran a coach for the aged and handicapped of the local hospitals and homes. A coach, built in 1963, had been purchased from the Jewish Welfare Board in 1974 and in the following five years, undertook over 400 trips covering some 20,000 miles, including trips to the seaside, fetes and carnivals, theatre, organised shopping trips and to Newhaven on the first stage of the journeys to Lourdes. In all, there were nine volunteer drivers and a number of attendants providing the service. In 1979, a project was launched to raise £15,000 for a new coach which would be equipped to take up to nine wheelchair patients or twenty-two seated passengers. Fund raising events were held throughout the area with many local organisations, public houses and traders taking part. **St. Joseph's in 2010** Next year on 26th July 2011, St. Joseph's celebrates its centenary. Structurally, the main change which has occurred is the building of the Sacred Heart Chapel on the south side of the High Altar. The other significant change to take place was the removal of the Altar and Altar Rails from their original position and the building of a new Altar following an edict from the Vatican for increased openness during Mass and the taking of the Sacrament. The Parish Hall was built in 1930, a gift from Mrs. Vertue and following the appointment of a committee, social functions were organised such as whist-drives and various fund raising events. Also around this time,

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an organ was installed. This was a gift of a Mrs. Ellis in memory of her husband Mr. Guy Ellis. The present Sacristy was built soon after the death of Mrs. Vertue and the original at the western end of the church became part of the presbytery. The congregation has now increased to some one hundred and twenty but members of the congregation who attended the first Mass would see the church much as it was on that day for overall, it has changed little over the years. *Researched & written by Brian Tapp, Grayshott Village Archive. March 2010* Acknowledgements: *St. Joseph's Church Sister Roberts: The Story of the Cenacle Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth Archives Haslemere Museum*

Daughters of the Heart of Mary

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