

# GRAYLINGWELL CHAPEL

A short introduction to its history



by Coral Botteley



## GRAYLINGWELL CHAPEL

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The original site of Graylingwell, as you are probably aware, was the West Sussex County Asylum, designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield in 1894. He was a prolific church architect and his design for the chapel reflects this as it is described as almost like a parish church. It was also utilitarian in nature as there were separate entrances for male and female patients and small rest rooms, one of which was set aside for epileptic patients should the need arise. The chapel is designed on a 'Pavilion system', whereby large independent buildings, each with a dedicated use, are joined by walkway tunnels. The tunnel entrance can still be found today, just to the left of the main door. Unlike the main hospital buildings constructed of red Cranleigh brick and artificial stone dressings, the chapel is faced with undressed local flints collected from the estate during construction. It has been suggested that this contrast in design was implemented in order

'to provide a comforting sense of tradition and permanence, or to emphasise the different character of religious days in the life of the hospital'. The chapel is certainly similar to those parish churches that would have been familiar to many of the patients who came from rural Sussex parishes. Patients who attended chapel services welcomed a different experience to daily life on the ward.

The chapel was dedicated by the Lord Bishop of the Chichester diocese at a special service, held on Tuesday 3rd August 1897 coinciding with the opening and receiving of patients in the asylum. Reverend F J Birkett was appointed chaplain and he states in the first chaplain's report of 1898 that there were two patients present at this service. The interior of the chapel was initially built to accommodate 378 seated. As in the main hospital, men and women were seated separately, divided by the main aisle.

## THE EARLY YEARS

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Music and singing were popular. An organ was built and provided by Messrs. Bryleson Brothers of Church Street, Islington. It was installed in July 1898 and was greatly enjoyed from that point on. A choir was formed and is mentioned in every annual report. A provision of £15 was made in the budget to provide the services of an organist and an endowment of £10 was requested annually by the chaplain to provide an annual 'choir treat'. In the early years this outing took the form of a day trip to Ventnor, which must have been a very exciting experience. The choir and its choirmaster were much appreciated by the chaplain and his congregation and also benefitted the wellbeing and confidence of the choristers.

The chaplain's duties were varied and numerous. He was expected to read prayers every morning at 8.30am after the patients' breakfast, in either the chapel or the recreation

hall. Those patients who were in the infirmary or too unwell to attend would be seen separately. An additional service was held at the infirmary weekly. Divine Service was held twice every Sunday in the chapel and at least once on Christmas Day and Good Friday. However, evidence in the annual reports shows that many more services were in fact held, with many Holy Day Services held throughout the religious calendar, often presided over by visiting clergy, including the Bishop of Chichester.

In addition to his religious duties, the chaplain was also involved with assisting illiterate patients with correspondence, organising and supplying the hospital library and holding regular religious instruction classes. Attendance throughout this period seems to be around 70% which was regarded as very satisfactory and there can be no doubt that the chapel played a vibrant and rich role in the daily life of Graylingwell.



*Past  
(Image courtesy of West Sussex Record Office)*



*Present day*



## THE MEMORIAL WINDOWS

Originally the windows in the chapel were plain glass. However, over the years these have been replaced with stained glass memorial windows.

From 1915-1919 the hospital was taken over by the War Office to be used as a war hospital. At the west end of the chapel is a memorial window dedicated by the Bishop of Lewes at a service held in February 1919. The inscription reads: 'To the glory of God and in honoured memory of the Officers, NCOs and men who died at Graylingwell, and of the members of the staff who fell in action; also in grateful record of the fortitude and cheerfulness of all those who occupied the wards in this hospital during the Great War 1914-1919.'

The window on the east side of the chancel contains a stained glass memorial to Dr Arthur Knox Stuart. Dr Stuart was a highly valued and skilled doctor and was Senior Assistant Medical Officer at Graylingwell for seven years under the Medical Superintendent Dr Harold Kidd. Dr Stuart had a horrific accident in Chichester in February 1915; he was seriously injured, and died a month later on 9<sup>th</sup> March. His family offered to fund a memorial window in remembrance of him and his two brothers, both of whom had fallen during the the Boer War and WWI. The inscription reads 'In affectionate Remembrance and Regret'.

The window to the right of the altar is dedicated to the members of staff who died in the Great War.

The final memorial window commemorates the dedicated service of Dr Harold Kidd, the first Medical Superintendent of the hospital. This window is situated to the left of the altar. It was dedicated on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1932 by the resident chaplain Selwyn Leighton Bucknell. A good number of relatives and friends attended.

Dr Harold Kidd's constant devotion to the wellbeing and individual needs of the patients was unwavering. Services held at the chapel on any given Sunday were not typical of the wider community by the very nature of the congregation and presented unique challenges. 'Religious Mania' was a common diagnosis during this period and an experienced chaplain would be well aware of this and would be able to adapt his sermon and service accordingly. No patient was made to attend chapel services but efforts were made to encourage attendance. Patients were always accompanied by members of staff. All patients were well dressed, neat and tidy and conversation and frivolity was strictly prohibited.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD  
AND IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STAFF OF THIS HOSPITAL WHO DIED 1914-1919.

PRIVATE JAMES BATHURST	ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT
CONDUCTOR W. BENNETT	ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT
SERGEANT HARRY HAYES	ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT
PRIVATE CHARLES BRENCH	ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT
CENSOR WILFRED SPENCER	ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT
PRIVATE ARTHUR HOLLIST	ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT
LANE CORPORAL FRANK HURST	ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT
PRIVATE THOMAS E. PURSLEY	ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT



## AS TIME GOES BY

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In the 1920s the library was opened each Thursday morning. It increased in popularity during the 1930s and by the 1940s was open daily for one hour. This was made possible by a patient, 'A.W.' offering his services. A small grant was applied for each year by the Reverend Bucknell to the Visiting Committee for the supply of books. In 1942 a scheme was offered by the British Red Cross and Order of St John's Hospital library to supply all books required (up to 500 a year) in return for a donation to the Red Cross. Books were exchanged twice a year.

During WW2 services sometimes had to be held in the hall during blackouts or sometimes curtailed due to air raids. In 1945 VE Day celebrations were held with most of the staff and patients attending three services of Thanksgiving.

In 1945 John C Salisbury takes over as chaplain.

In 1947 regular recitals of Sacred Music took place. These were performed by Mrs Elizabeth Backhouse (soprano) and Michael Mowbray (violin).

In 1948 extra reports began to appear in the annual report by the Roman Catholic Chaplain, J B Hoare and the Free Church Chaplain, P J Spooner. Community singing was introduced first in the chapel and later in Female Ward F and the Occupational Therapy Centre. Roman Catholic services were held in the chapel on the second Sunday of each month, with mass being held in the hospital each Tuesday in the Oratory and later in the rest room in Kingsmead Villa. This was seen as a temporary arrangement as a Roman Catholic Church in the grounds was hoped for. The longed-for Roman Catholic chapel was finally realised in 1961 when the management committee agreed to modify a large room which formed part of the old sanatorium building with a second smaller room adjoining it to be fitted as a sacristy;

*'Marley tiled floor. Benches and altar rail in Japanese oak. Altar in synthetic stone. The Parish provided wooden turned candlesticks and altar linen. A wooden crucifix and a rich red damask curtain against which the crucifix will hang.'*

On 30th May 1962 the Right Reverent Monsignor CC Cowdray, Bishop of Southwark, blessed the chapel.

The chaplain made daily visits to the wards over the years and in the 1949 Graylingwell annual report a note was made in Rev JC Salisbury's report revealing how important these visits were to the patients. One patient describes that the chaplain's visits led to the turning point in her recovery. In spite of the depression she was passing through when she came to the hospital, she can still remember much of the sermons she heard in church and quotes from one of them: 'Prayer allows them to rise above their present circumstances'.

Visiting wards was seen as vital work for the chaplain. It made him a familiar face, and his visits would encourage the attendance of services in the chapel. In a later annual report there was a special note made by the chaplain; on speaking with a patient who was finding life difficult, her face betraying misery and distress, she said 'How great is a little kindness!' The chaplain would often receive letters from former patients offering thanks and gratitude for the spiritual help they received which they felt aided their recovery.

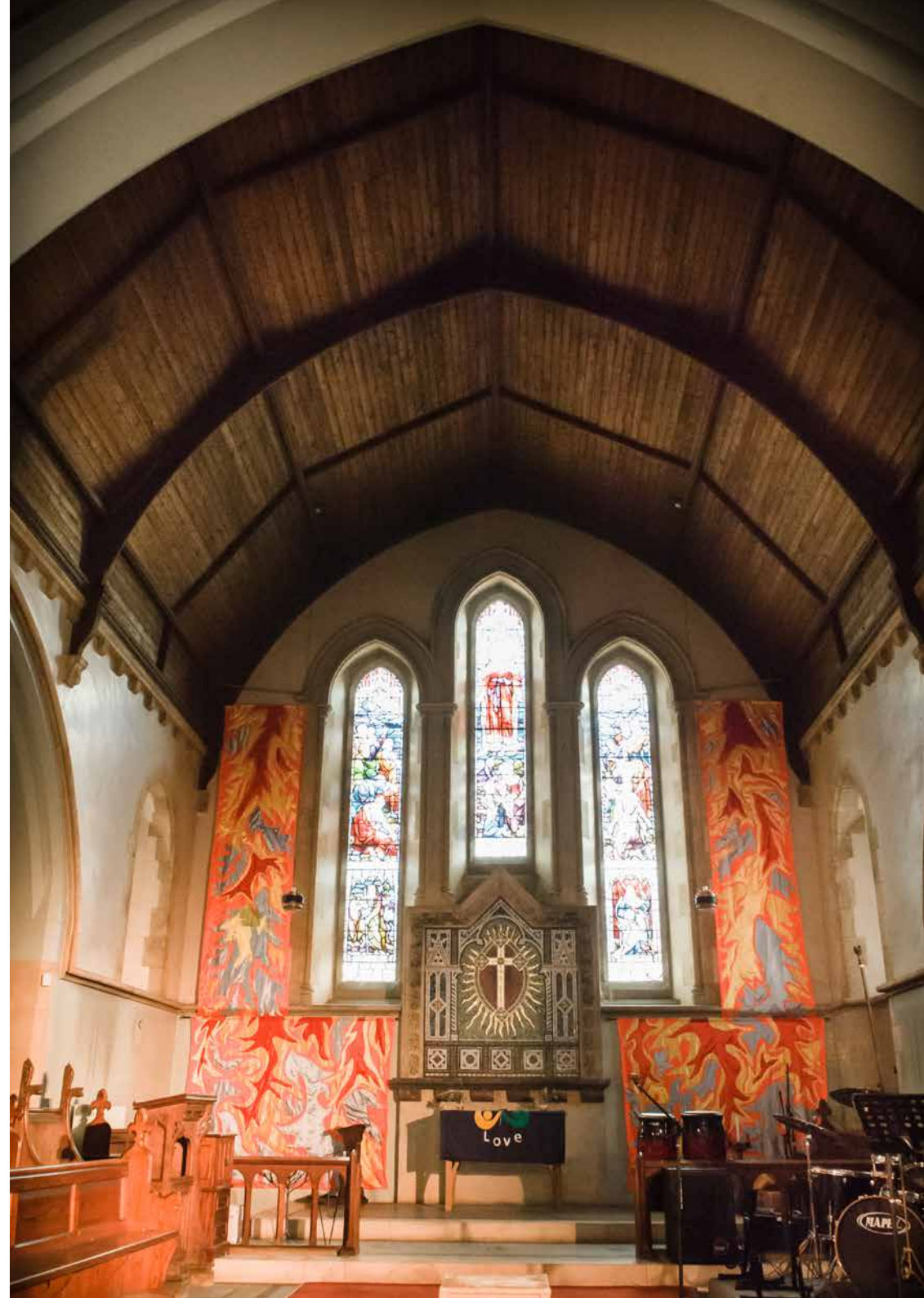
By 1950 the success and popularity of the community singing led to the

formation of a percussion band which led the singing. In February 1950 the Catholic Drama Club presented 'The Poltergeist' for the patients' entertainment.

In 1953 a new idea was introduced; 'The Service of Prayer', in connection with the Women's World Day of Prayer. Miss E Fisher gave a talk to a large congregation of women. It was hoped this would be a regular service in Lent each year; this proved to be true as this service featured in subsequent annual reports. By the mid-1950s it was believed that Graylingwell Chapel was the second largest hospital chapel in Sussex.

In the course of time regular services held in the chapel each year were: Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Women's World Day, Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday, Nine Lessons and Carols and Christmas Day.

There are no annual reports available after 1967 but one can assume that services still continued for some years. However, since 2010 Immanuel Church has held regular Sunday worship and choir practice takes place every Tuesday for the Community Choir. The Reverend Steve Flashman has led both the worship and the choir and large numbers attend.



## ORAL HISTORIES

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*"I had three patients used to work in the church so, polishing the floors and polishing the altar, all the chalice, the silver and all, spick and span, and all the laundry cloths were taken to be cleaned and ironed from the dress making department and other departments..."*

Thomas

*"It's hidden amongst the trees, but now it's very much part of the Graylingwell Park Estate, which is a new estate since the closure of the hospital and it's a very thriving church. And I've joined the choir there! So I had quite a lump in my throat when I first went there and sang in the choir and I thought back to when we used to take the patients along for carol services and things like that."*

Chrissie



*"I mean the Graylingwell Chapel for most of my admissions was not working and I remember one patient viewpoint, we'd just come out and were waiting for the lift home and we saw somebody coming into the chapel and we thought "Oh". A couple of us were really keen and Steve, the Vicar was actually the person there and he said "Oh, come in and have a look round" and it was lovely to see it re-invigorated as a church."*

Clare

*"Church services were always full on a Sunday. We had to escort groups of patients from the ward, your ward, into the church. Most of them wanted to go. Quite a few felt it was outside the ward and a good place to be rather than in the ward. But we never had any real disturbances. Church services were carried out every Sunday."*

John

*"On Sundays those patients who went to the church service were counted out and counted in and the student nurse was responsible for them. On one occasion one patient was missing after the morning walk in the garden and he was in big trouble."*

Peter

# THE FUTURE

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Graylingwell Chapel is now in need of major refurbishment, and as a Grade II listed building needs careful planning and execution. The long-term future for the building is for it to become a community space for the local community, multi-functional and used by many different organisations.

We would like to encourage all residents and the wider community to give their input as to how they would like this space to be used. The timescale for the refurbishment has yet to be established; but feedback from you ahead of time will give us valuable ideas as to potential uses and help guide how the final fit out should be implemented.

The future of Graylingwell Chapel is important to us all as the vision is for it to become a vibrant and versatile building, offering a great facility. It will still retain its character as an original Victorian structure but the work that will take place on refurbishment will ensure a solid, well-equipped, well-used space that will benefit the whole community. Your involvement in its future is welcomed and we look forward to seeing the chapel move further into the 21st century with a new look and a new lease of life. This will be YOUR building for you all to use and enjoy.



Coral Botteley  
Summer 2016

The references are:

FIRST REFERENCE:

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Unpublished essay quoted with permission.

Oral Histories, Graylingwell Heritage Project (2015),  
quoted with permission.

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“This historic, Grade II listed building, situated adjacent to The Lodge, will be entering a new phase of its life in the not too distant future. So perhaps now is a good time to share a little of its history with you, to give you an understanding of its place in our community in days gone by and how it has evolved and will develop as part of the Graylingwell community in the 21st century.”

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