

St Jude-on-the-Hill, Hampstead Garden Suburb and the First World War



The Reverend Alan Walker

St Jude-on-the-Hill and the First World War

The First World War is remembered and commemorated at St Jude's in several ways. Two weeks after the declaration of the War in August 1914 the first vicar, the Reverend Basil Bouchier, left for Belgium as chaplain to a women's hospital unit organized by parishioner and 'sidesman' Mabel Stobart Greenhalgh. The pair were arrested as spies, but saved from the firing squad by a German officer who had visited the Suburb before the war while studying town planning.

In November 1914 the church formed its own *Sharpshooters League* made up of boys from the parish who were not old enough to volunteer. They practised on a rifle range in the vicarage garden.

The architect of the church, Sir Edwin Lutyens, designed the national war memorial, the *Cenotaph* in Whitehall (1920), and the *Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme* in northern France (1928), which closely resemble the architecture of the church.

When visiting the Western Front in 1918 Bouchier made the acquaintance of the artist Walter P. Starmer who was working with the Red Cross and recording the work of the YMCA in providing rest and support for the troops. His sketches – many of which are now in the Imperial War Museum – illustrate a history of the war work of the YMCA by its General Secretary, Sir Arthur Yapp, *The Romance of the Red Triangle* (1920).

Bouchier invited Starmer to decorate the Lady Chapel of the church as a war memorial. He chose to do so with murals illustrating the women of the Bible, but including, in the west dome, representations *illustrative of various types of women who have laboured and suffered for the*



Rev Basil Bouchier



Walter P. Starmer

furtherance of the Kingdom of God, as witnesses for right as they conceived it, and for the extension of righteousness among men.

The actual choice of eminent women (see diagram at the entrance to the chapel) probably owed something to Mrs Stobart Greenhalgh who chaired the fundraising committee. As well as Christian heroines from earlier times, there are some, more recent women, who stood for causes that she particularly supported, and the scheme as a whole may be seen as part of the continuing campaign for the extension of women's suffrage.

Several of the women portrayed in the Lady Chapel dome were advocates for animal welfare, a cause for which the vicar was a noted campaigner (he was not so keen on votes for women). Starmer the artist had himself been employed as the illustrator for an antivivisection journal. Bouchier had seen the suffering of animals in the war, and was responsible for the memorial to the warhorses



Horse Memorial



Lady Chapel Dome

now next to the west door of the church. Unveiled in 1926 it is one of the earliest of its kind. The wording on the plaque reads:

A.M.D.G./ IN GRATEFUL AND REVERENT/ MEMORY
OF THE EMPIRE'S/ HORSES (SOME 375,000) WHO
FELL IN/ THE GREAT WAR (1914-1918)/ MOST
OBEDIENTLY, AND OFTEN/ MOST PAINFULLY, THEY
DIED/ "FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH/ NOT ONE OF
THEM IS/ FORGOTTEN BEFORE GOD"/ EASTER 1926.

The bronze relief above it (which suggests a certain hostility between man and beast) is the work of Rosemary Proctor, daughter of the third vicar, the Reverend W. Maxwell Rennie, and was made in 1970 to replace a free standing model of a horse by Charles Lutyens, father of the architect, which had been stolen.

As well as the list of the Fallen in the Lady Chapel, in 1916 the church placed a crucifix on the exterior of the east wall where there is a small memorial garden (restored in 2011 to mark the centenary of the consecration of the church). This was removed together with several accompanying tablets in 1935 and placed in a space in the south-west porch of the church which it was intended should become a tomb-like shrine to the dead. Many of the names recorded there were not Suburb residents but friends or relatives of the large congregations drawn from further afield by Bouchier's personality and preaching. The shrine has been restored to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the War. The royal coat of arms above the west door was also given to the church to mark the anniversary.

St Jude's has one more memorial, on the north wall near the pulpit. This commemorates Lieutenant John Raphael of the King's Royal Rifle Corps who died of wounds received on June 7th at the Battle of Messines Ridge aged 35. Raphael had been contemporary of Bouchier at Merchant Taylors' School. He was a keen sportsman, winning 14 blues at Oxford: four for Rugby,



The Calvary



Tomb like shrine

three for cricket, three for swimming, and four for water polo; he won nine Rugby International Caps for England, and captained Surrey at both rugby and cricket. His monument is by the sculptor Charles Sykes who designed the *Spirit of Ecstasy statuette* for Rolls Royce motorcars.

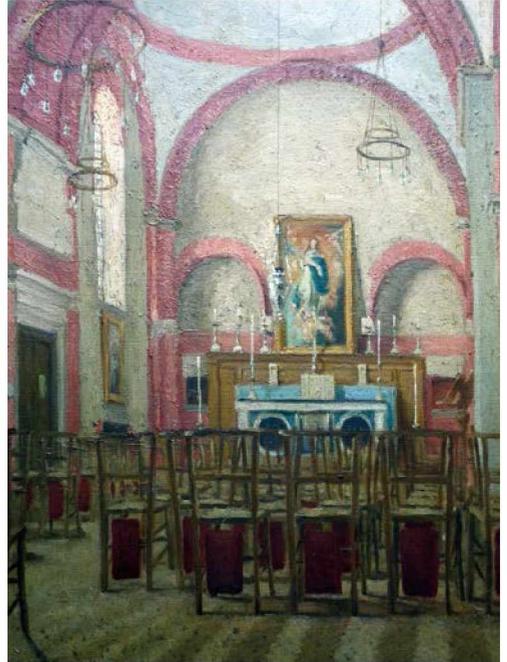
Nearby, at the entrance to the Lady Chapel, an icon of the Virgin and Child recalls events brought about by the First World War. It records a visit to the church by the Empress Marie Feodorovna of Russia (1847 – 1928). Born Princess Dagmar of Denmark, Marie was the consort of Tsar Alexander III, and the mother of the last Russian monarch, Nicholas II (whom she outlived by ten years). During the War, she served as President of Russia's Red Cross, but was forced to flee the country after the Revolution. She was received in London by her sister Queen Alexandra (then Queen Mother), but eventually settled in her native Denmark. For the remainder of her life she was considered by many Russian royalists to be the head of the imperial dynasty.



Lieutenant John Raphael Memorial



Virgin and Child icon



During the War the residents of Hampstead Garden Suburb gave shelter and support to many Belgian refugees who had escaped the occupation of their country. Two of these, the brothers Karel and Barth Verschaeren of Mechelen, went on to become distinguished artists respectively in the United States and back in Belgium. St Jude's possesses three paintings by them, fascinating because they show the church as it was in the few years between its construction and its decoration by Starmer, and how it would have appeared to the many who worshipped and found solace here during what turned out to be such terrible times.

We hope you will remember them and all those associated with St Jude's who served in the Great War.

Verschaeren paintings