

All Saints' Chapel

Windlesham House School's 'All Saints' Chapel' is an undoubtedly beautiful building, one with a long history, as it is now located in its fourth home. It began as the church attached to what has become known as Carfax Tower in the heart of Oxford. There it had been used over the centuries by, amongst others, William Shakespeare and John and Charles Wesley. Street widening in 1896 threatened the tenth century St Martin's Church until it was rescued from demolition and bought by the then Windlesham heads, Charles and Grace Scott Malden. As much as could be saved came to Sussex, stone by stone, timber by timber, at a time when the school was in Norfolk Terrace, Brighton.

The 'architect' who oversaw the rebuilding of St Martin's Church in Norfolk Terrace was a 19 year old former pupil then studying architecture, Henry Archibald Douglass, who went on to become a fellow of RIBA. He had by the end of the summer term 1896 done a sketch for the chapel to be built in flint and brick on ground next to the house. Sadly Charles Malden died three months before the chapel was dedicated to 'All Saints' on 12 December 1896.

The plaques with crests around the walls relate to the funding of the acquisition of the Chapel. Pupils and their families were subsequently invited to donate towards the costs and were then able to have a panel commemorating the pupil, whose name and dates at Windlesham appear along with, in most cases, the crest of the public school on to which they went. In just a few cases the family crest was used instead. The Chapel has journeyed since then with the school as it moved, first to Portslade and then arriving finally here at Highden, between Findon and Washington, in the 1930s.

The chapel is, in fact, now "orientated," somewhat unusually because of its present location, to the north. This is so because, as has always been the case during its Windlesham history, the chapel is attached to the main school buildings and is therefore both its geographical and its spiritual centre.

The building has some fine stained glass windows original to the school's use of it, including a new one in the south (east) wall designed by local artist Mel Howse. This celebrates the life and work of the final Malden head, Charles C Malden and was dedicated on Remembrance Sunday 2003. It also has a magnificent Morgan & Smith organ, rebuilt and enlarged in 1991 by Patrick Christian and on which there have subsequently been recitals by both Gillian Weir and Wayne Marshall, amongst others. The stairs to the organ loft were originally the steps up to a three-decker pulpit, for which there is no longer sufficient space.

The rather old White Ensign which hangs in Chapel celebrates the school's connection with the sea, as Windlesham was originally established for the sons of naval officers. Indeed Lieutenant Charles Malden RN was coaching such boys before he ever took on the original Isle of Wight premises. The naval link remained over many years as is exemplified by the number of boys who went on to RNC Pangbourne, many of whom on scholarships as the awards boards still testify.

The memorial by the main door is a Roll of Honour indicating those who served in the Armed Forces during the Second World War, those marked with a cross being those who gave their lives during the conflict. There are other memorials around the chapel recalling several conflicts; indeed the angels on the beams are part of one and the left hand middle window is in honour of those who served in the Boer War.

The unusual painting of the Christ Child on the panelling behind the altar was done by a now unknown but clearly skilful former pupil. It was expertly restored in 2006 by a specialist in art conservation, former parent Alan Bradford, who commented on the expertise of the original work.

The Chapel is very much in regular use for school worship, both during the week and on Sundays, and has also been licensed for use at occasional weddings, christenings and for memorial services.