

THE PROPRIETORY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

With some notes on the Church Building Acts and the 'Papal Aggression' at Gravesend

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About twenty-five years ago Father John McNally, then Parish Priest of St. John, Gravesend, showed me a vellum bound book inscribed 'Minutes Chapel of Ease', containing the minutes of the company which built and maintained St. John's, Milton-next-Gravesend, as an Anglican Proprietary Chapel from 1834 to 1842. This volume had been given to him by Miss Irene Arnold, of St. Catherine's, Shorne, and had belonged to her father the late George Matthews Arnold (see below). By the kindness of Canon Eamon Munday, the present Parish Priest of Gravesend, I have recently borrowed this volume and made notes from it. This article deals with the history of this building in the context of the provision of additional church accommodation at Gravesend and the way in which this chapel became the Roman Catholic Church in 1851, the year of the so-called 'Papal Aggression'.¹

The total population of the parishes of Gravesend and Milton-next-Gravesend, which made up the borough of Gravesend prior to 1935, increased from 4,539 in 1801 to 15,670 in 1841.² The only Anglican places of worship were the two parish churches of St. George, Gravesend, and Sts. Peter and Paul, Milton. In 1818 both these churches built additional galleries, in the case of Gravesend with the assistance of a grant under the Church Building Act 1818.³ (Milton may also have obtained a grant but the Vestry Minutes for this period are missing.) The church accommodation, however, was still inadequate for the resident population and summer visitors, who with the introduction of the steam boats in 1815, came to the town in large numbers.

It was to meet this need that the Gravesend Vestry on the 17th May,

¹ As to the so-called 'Papal Aggression' see Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Part 1, (Third Edition, 1971) 271-309, and W. Ward, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman*, (1897) Vol. 1, 538-569, and Vol. 2, 1-37.

² Supplement to R. P. Cruden, *History of Gravesend and the Port of London*, (1843), 543.

³ The 'Million Pound Act'. The Act of 1824 added a further half million. For the Church Building Acts generally, see M. H. Port, *Six Hundred New Churches*, (1961). For St. George, see Gravesend Vestry Minutes 4th August, 1818. Meeting to adopt the Act. Gravesend Corporation Archives 2.P.G.K.2/1 782/1824.

1832 (after suggesting the erection of galleries at the east end of the church which were not proceeded with), agreed 'that the Parish of Milton wanting similar accommodation it was in contemplation to effect the erection of a church or chapel there for the benefit of the two parishes jointly with the assistance of the Commissioners for building additional churches and that the Rectors and Parish Officers and other inhabitants were now assembled at the Poor House⁴ and asked to attend'.⁵ A joint meeting thereupon took place and a committee consisting of the Rector, Church Wardens and three other members from each Parish was appointed. This committee met on the 17th May when two possible sites for the chapel were considered: (i) A plot of ground fronting London Road on the north side of Mr. Beckett's Garden (this was probably the site at the junction of Milton Road and Parrock Street on which St. John's was built); and (ii) a plot at the north end of the Gift House garden and presenting a frontage to the London Road and to Windmill Street (this was part of the site of Pinnock's Almshouses in the vicinity of the present National Westminster Bank in King Street) – Mr. Beckett's plot £200. 'Resolved that the Rectors be requested to pursue their applications to the Commissioners for Building New Churches and confer with the Charity Trustees as to whether they would entertain an application for the Trust ground.' Nothing more appears in the Gravesend Vestry Minutes and the Milton ones for this period are missing, but in the Church Commissioners File for Holy Trinity, Milton-next-Gravesend⁶ there is a letter dated June 1832 from the Rev. S. Watson, Rector of Gravesend, and the Rev. J. S. Stokes, Rector of Milton, asking for guidance as to making a formal application for a grant and setting out that there were '5,000 souls in each parish, Gravesend had seating for 1,000 and Milton for 500, there were many new houses building, they could obtain a site convenient for both parishes but a joint case did not seem to be provided for in the form'.

There is no note of a reply to this letter, copies of replies do not seem to have been kept by the Church Commissioners at this time although there is sometimes a note on the incoming letter that it had been replied to. Neither is there any completed application form or reference to this application in any of the extant commissioners minute books covering this period.⁷ On the 10th April, 1833, the Rev. Stokes wrote to the commissioners asking for assistance to enlarge Milton

⁴ This was the Poor House erected in 1797 now nos. 21, 22 and 23 Stone Street; see R. Pocock, *History of the incorporated Town and Parishes of Gravesend and Milton*, (1797), 248.

⁵ Gravesend Corporation Archives G.R. 2 P.G.V. 2/2 Gravesend Vestry Minutes, 1824/42.

⁶ Church Commissioners File 15946. Holy Trinity, Milton-next-Gravesend.

⁷ For these records, see Port, *op. cit.*, 192.

THE PROPRIETORY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

Church, and on the 17th August the same year he wrote 'following a meeting' (of the parish?) with a scheme for closing Milton Church and either pulling it down or using it for a mortuary chapel and building a new church on a new site – 'he understood from your Lordships that there would be difficulties but want to know if they are insurmountable'. The Parish were prepared to raise £3,000 or £4,000, but apparently nothing happened and Milton Church survived!

No further action seems to have been taken by Gravesend Parish but on the 16th August, 1833, 'the Vestry Clerk reported that certain Gentlemen had it in contemplation to erect a Chapel of Ease and that it had the approbation of the Bishop of Rochester and Curate of the Parish and submitted to the Vestry a copy of the Resolutions passed at a meeting of several inhabitants of the Town holden at the Town Hall on Friday the 9th inst'.⁸

This meeting on the 9th August, 1833, is recorded in the Chapel of Ease Minute Book as follows:

'At a meeting of several inhabitants of the Town of Gravesend holden at the Town Hall on Friday the 9th day of August 1833.

Present the Mayor in the Chair, the Rev. W. W. Ellis M.A. (curate of Gravesend), Mr. E. W. Woodford, Mr. T. Taylor, Mr. W. Elliott, Mr. R. C. Arnold (the father of G. M. Arnold), Mr. John Smith, Mr. Matthews – Terrace Mr. Pearson, Mr. Jno Matthews.

Resolved unanimously:

That the Established Churches of the town afford accommodation for about 1,400 persons only and that as there is a permanent resident Population of 10,000 persons which is considerably increased in the summer season a great number of families are prevented attending Divine Worship from the want of a sufficient number of sittings.

That it would be a great benefit to the Town if a Chapel of Ease as a Branch of the Established Church was erected to afford additional accommodation.

That such a structure may be erected and completed in every respect including the cost of the ground and incidental expenses for a sum not exceeding £5,000.

That it would be advisable to raise such capital in 100 shares of £50 each and that no person should hold more than five shares.

That the management of the capital should be vested in the Shareholders or in Trustees appointed by them.

That the choice of ground and the appointment of an Architect and Builder should be made by the Shareholders.

That the election of the Minister, Organist and other Officers should also be made by the Shareholders.

⁸ Gravesend Minutes, *op. cit.*

That when one half the number of shares are subscribed for a meeting of the Shareholders should be convened for carrying the above and other necessary measures into effect.

That the Shareholders should pay a deposit of £2 per share.

That Mr. Robert Coles Arnold be appointed Treasurer pro. tem.

That Matthews and Pearson be the Secretaries and Solicitors pro. tem.

That persons desirous of shares be requested to apply to the Treasurer or to the Secretaries.

(Signed) William Eagle
Chairman

That the thanks of this meeting be given to William Eagle Esquire the Mayor for the use of the Town Hall and for his conduct in the Chair.

That the foregoing Resolutions be printed and circulated.'

No reference is made here or anywhere else in the Minutes to applying to the Church Commissioners for a grant and apparently it was intended to operate the company as a profit-making concern and those taking part in its affairs were also involved in various other local speculations such as the Gravesend Freehold Investment Company (Milton Park Estate), The Terrace Pier and Gardens Company, and the 'Star' and 'Diamond' steam packet companies.⁹

This meeting was followed by one on the 11th September, 1833, when a Committee of twelve Proprietors was appointed 'for preparing a deed of settlement and providing for rules and regulations and carrying the venture into effect'. Thereafter, the Proprietors only met on special occasions usually once per annum and all other affairs of the company were carried on at first by the committee and later by the directors. On the 18th September the committee met when five tenders for land were received but as the printed circulars had not put a time limit they deferred consideration of them until the 27th September when they were reduced to four, viz.

'No. 1. Mr. Becketts opposite Glovers Pond Parrock Place £300.

No. 2. Mr. Snows opposite the Clarence Hotel £294. (The site of the Clarence Hotel is now Nos. 72-74 Windmill Street.)

No. 3. Mr. Taylors Brickfield near St. Georges Terrace. (This site is now the Police Station and part of the Civic Centre.)

No. 4. Mr. Harveys west of Parrock Lane.'

The meeting on the 18th September had already appointed 'Mr.

⁹ For these companies, see Cruden, *op. cit.*, and a paper as yet unpublished by A. F. Allen.

THE PROPRIETARY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

Jenkins Junior' to be the architect¹⁰ and at this meeting he laid before the committee his report 'on the most eligible spots of ground for erecting the Chapel' and three designs and estimates for 1,000 sittings at £4,000, £4,150 and £4,250, the last one being 'Gothic'. In addition the committee decided to write to Mr. W. T. Clark, Mr. Hopkins and Mr. C. Parker to submit plans if they thought fit. Mr. W. T. Clark¹¹ had designed the Town Pier, and Mr. C. Parker¹² was a student of Sir J. Wyattville. 'Mr. Hopkins' may have been J. D. Hopkins, a pupil of J. B. Papworth. The committee directed 'That the list of subscribers on no account be made known to any applicant', presumably to stop canvassing.

A meeting of the Proprietors was then called at the Town Hall on the 4th October when all four architects submitted plans and tenders, Mr. Jenkins' plan being now for 1,200 rentals and 300 free 'Gothic building' for £3,950. This was the lowest tender (the others rising to £4,200) and the only one where the style was indicated. This was recommended by the Committee and accepted by the proprietors. According to the minutes there were 'about 50' present with the Mayor Wm. Eagle in the chair. The voting was Jenkins 61, Clark 25, Hopkins 3, Parker 2. Each half share of £25 carried one vote. Wm. Woodward (in fact 'Wood') was appointed builder. The meeting also elected directors, viz: John Smith, Wm. Eagle, R. P. Cruden (the historian), John Brenchley, R. C. Arnold, Wm. Gladish, Warwick Weston, A. Wilcoxon Junior and Geo. Shoobridge. Thirteen trustees including the Mayor and Chamberlain for the time being and also three auditors were appointed. There then follows a detailed specification headed 'Gothic Style' – white Suffolk bricks were to be used for facing the front and two sides. This seems to have been the first use of this type of brick in the town. Their use became popular during the nineteenth century for public buildings such as the extension of the municipal offices in 1895 and for some of the better houses. In some cases they were used for the front elevation with local stocks for the sides and back. Bath stone was used for the jambs, mullions and cills and for the cupola, coping and cornices. The timber for the gallery, roof and ceiling was to be of Memel fir, with king- and queen-posts of oak or iron, crown glass in the windows, altar finished with composition ornament and cast-iron railing. There were several references to 'gothic moulding' and the deal doors were to be framed with 'gothic ornaments'. The original building

¹⁰ William Jenkins Junior, of Red Lion Square, had travelled in Greece and exhibited at the Royal Academy, 'A View of the Parthenon', see H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects 1660-1840*, (1954), 320, and J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Greek Revival*, (1972), 15 and 64.

¹¹ Cruden, *op. cit.*, 505.

¹² Colvin, *op. cit.*, 444.

contract dated 29th November, 1833, is in the Gravesend Library¹³ and was made between the Committee members of the one part and William Wood, of Milton-next-Gravesend, Builder, of the other part and provides for the work to be in accordance with 'William Jenkins the Younger's plans and specifications for £3,950 and additional work but the cost not to exceed £100'.

During 1833 the directors met about once a week. On the 8th October, they agreed a deed of constitution (no copy appears to have survived) and viewed Mr. Becket's ground and expressed their disappointment at the boundaries 'which at their suggestion were altered to contain a frontage of 150 feet and a depth of 100 feet. Mr. Wood attended and agreed to build the chapel for £3,950. A call of £5 per share was made and an application to the Bishop of Rochester to license the chapel and also to Mr. Stokes, the Rector of Milton, for his consent to opening the chapel. Letters from both the Bishop and the Rector were read at the meeting on the 1st November approving. After approaching the Bishop, who was not available, and considering the Earl and Countess of Darnley who were in London, it was decided to dispense with the ceremony of laying the foundation stone.

On the 8th January, Mr. Jenkins reported that the work had gone to his entire satisfaction, but that the builder was waiting three weeks for Suffolk bricks due to contrary winds. Various additions and improvements were made by the directors from time to time at Mr. Jenkins' suggestion including an organ for £250 and an iron fence and gates at a total cost of £330.

As early as the 20th November, 1833, an application was received for the post of minister by a Dr. Croly (presumably the Rev. G. Croly, D.D., author of 'Salathiel' and some popular doggerel verses on Rosherville Gardens). This was followed by various other applications and the directors indicated that the salary would be not less than £200 per annum, the minister to take up residence at Gravesend and to give up all other clerical duties. At a meeting of the directors held on the 25th May, 1834, letters and testimonials were read from the Revs. H. Bell, D. Brent, W. Davies, W. W. Ellis, J. R. Fudge, T. B. G. More, J. P. Neale, H. R. Slade, and C. Woodward. The Rev. W. W. Ellis was a proprietor as well as being the curate at St. George's and had apparently sent round a printed circular, which caused displeasure to the directors and, after some correspondence, he resigned as a proprietor and the following minute appears in the Gravesend Vestry Book:

'July 10 1834 Mr. Gladish and several parishioners complained

¹³The original building agreement is in a folder [of miscellaneous items of G. M. Arnold] at the Gravesend Public Library.

THE PROPRIETORY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

that the Rev. W. W. Ellis had on several occasions and especially on Sunday last used the pulpit for the purposes of abuse towards several parishioners and of expressing his own disappointment and anger at having failed in his canvass for minister of the New Chapel by which he had given offence to the Parishioners generally and brought scandal on the spiritual office with which he as curate of the Parish was charged. It was therefore recommended that the Churchwardens do represent these feelings to the proper officers at the next visitation.¹⁴

On the 2nd July, 1834, the directors drew up a declaration as to their duties to be signed by candidates and only two candidates, the Rev. G. Smally and the Rev. H. Bell offering themselves, a ballot was taken when the Rev. Smally received 110 votes to the Rev. Bell's 3 votes. The Rev. Bell resigned and the Rev. G. Smally was elected unanimously.

On the 9th July the directors complained about the delays of the builder and expressed their displeasure. At the next meeting they chose an organ 'the entire case of Spanish Mahogany' at a cost of £260 and Mr. Jenkins was called on for plans for the sittings including seats for the directors and one for use of the Mayor. On the 30th September, 1833, the Council had formally sanctioned the building of the chapel and agreed to invest £100 therein 'as an encouragement and in consideration of the great inconvenience from the want of sufficient room in the established churches of the town'.¹⁵

There was a certain amount of trouble in obtaining the Bishop's licence for Mr. Smally as the Bishop objected to one of the proprietors' conditions that Mr. Smally would resign on request, but this was resolved and the Bishop gave his consent which was received on the 9th October, 1834. The form of appointment from the bishop being 'the same as for Woolwich Chapel'.¹⁶

The directors decided that the price of annual single sittings be as follows:

GALLERY: Front row, £1 1s.; second, £1; third and fourth, 18s.; fifth and sixth, 16s.; seventh and eighth, 12s.

BODY: Ten from the pulpit and desk, £1; seven next, 16s.; eight more, 14s.; nine side pews, 16s.

Family pews of six and upwards to be allowed a reduction equal to the price of one sitting.

A tender from Mr. Heslop of £104 0s. 6d. for the pews was accepted

¹⁴ Vestry Minutes, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Gravesend Corporation Archives Council Minutes, 1823-1834 G.R. A.C.6.

¹⁶ See W. T. Vincent, *The Records of Woolwich, Vol. I*, n.d., but c. 1890. This chapel had been erected in 1833 and consecrated in 1852, having been purchased from the proprietors by subscription and a grant of £1,000 by the War Department.

and payment of £30 per annum for an organist and £12 per annum for a man and wife for cleaner and pew opener were agreed. Two assistant pew openers were to be paid 1s. per Sunday. The directors had already appointed a clerk at £10 per annum and a collector of pew rents at 2½ per cent. The clerk to have a gown.

It was intended to have some movable free seats in the centre aisle but, on the 23rd October, the directors ordered these to be stored under the Chapel and a sufficient number of side seats and back pews to be used as free seats.

The directors decided to light the Chapel by gas, install a clock, and agreed Mr. Jenkins' design for pieces of Sheffield communion plate at £25 from Mr. Dix, of Sheffield. Mr. Smally kindly undertook to procure the necessary books.

The Chapel was opened on Sunday, 16th November, 1834. The Bishop of Rochester and the Earl of Darnley were invited but could not attend, but the Mayor and Corporation and the Rector of Milton, the Rev. Stokes attended and no charge was made for seats on the first day.

An advertisement of the opening appears in the 'Gravesend and Milton Journal' (a short-lived local paper) on the 15th November, 1834, when it was stated that the Rev. Geo. Smally would preach and that applications for seats should be made to Mr. Croswaite, Princess Street, or Mr. Cooper, of St. Paul's, 'no collections'. On the 22nd November a reader complained of ill-treatment because he brought a child. On the 3rd January the paper reported that the shareholders had a dinner at the Pier Hotel 'with Mr. Brenchley in the chair and Mr. Justice Eagle opposite'. In January an advertiser offered two £50 shares at £45 each and in February they were reduced to £40. A letter from a visitor complained of being charged 1s. for a seat and a long sermon.

R. P. Cruden who was at the time a very active director and frequently took the chair at directors' meetings states in his history¹⁷ that the chapel was dedicated to St. John the Baptist '... which being consecrated was opened for Divine Service', but there is no evidence of consecration in the minutes; indeed, the Bishop does not appear to have attended and it was merely licensed. Likewise, there is no reference to its dedication although it always seems to have been known as St. John's. The name only appears twice in the minutes: once when there is a resolution that the inscription on the plate be St. John's Chapel, Gravesend, 17th November, 1834 (minute of the 6th December, 1834), and once in the Accounts in 1837 (see below). The present Roman Catholic dedication is St. John the Evangelist.

The building is in 'pre-antiquarian gothic' with well detailed

¹⁷ Cruden, *op. cit.*, 519.

THE PROPRIETORY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

geometrical plate tracery and a shallow five-sided canted apse with three east windows. It originally had a small bell turret, which appears in the block on the share certificates and also in the line drawing (Fig. 1) reproduced in 'A Month at Gravesend' by Miss Brabazon, who described it in her opinion as 'by far the most beautiful and sacred-looking of the ecclesiastical buildings in Gravesend'.¹⁸ It originally had



Fig. 1. St. John, Gravesend, c. 1860 (Gravesham Public Library Collection)

galleries on three sides, which were later removed at the expense of G. M. Arnold, but this caused structural weakness and a curious form of truss and cast-iron columns were erected in 1914 to support the roof. The only classical elements, except the plan, are the small pediments on the tops of the buttresses. The tower was added in 1872–73 by Goldie and Child and is not part of the original design.

The directors at their next meeting on the 6th December, held for the first time in the vestry room, appeared to be anxious about money and instructed the collector to get in immediately one-half year's pew rents in advance and their solicitors immediately to enforce payment of arrears of calls. A pedestal was to be erected in the vestibule for voluntary donations and a notice that persons not renting seats were expected to put into the box one shilling, which would entitle them to a sitting for the day but the notice also stated 'Free seats for the Poor'.

¹⁸ E. J. Brabazon, *A Month at Gravesend*, (1862), 55, 2nd Ed. (1864), 64.

On the 24th December the Treasurer reported that he had obtained from Mr. Cooper one large stove to warm the entire chapel.

The first general meeting of the proprietors was held on the 29th December. There were fifteen members including two women present, with R. P. Cruden in the chair. The meeting had been adjourned from the 29th November due to lack of a quorum. It was reported that £4,052 had been received in respect of shares and £325 18s. 0d. taken in respect of pews. The builder had been paid £4,000 on account, Mr. Jenkins, the architect, £104, and there were sundry disbursements of £33 18s. 3d. The directors, having furnished the chapel 'in a manner suited to the elegance of the building and lighted with gas and provided an organ', it was now estimated that it would cost £6,500. The meeting agreed unanimously that the directors should raise the full extent of the capital under the deed. Further meetings followed and, on the 5th February, the auditors reported that £4,265 had been received and £4,196 11s. 4d. paid and there were total bills outstanding of £3,228 1s. 8½d. to meet for which there was £68 8s. 8d. in hand and £735 calls in arrears leaving a deficit of £2,320 13s. 0½d. The proprietors resolved to issue the remaining shares and raise a loan of £2,000 at interest. An extraordinary meeting of the proprietors was called on the 13th February, which authorized the directors to mortgage the chapel to raise £2,000.

There is in the Church Commissioners files¹⁹ 'Articles of enquiry of the 6th February 1835 St. John's Chapel Milton next Gravesend. A Proprietary Chapel without Cure of Souls belongs to certain individuals at whose expense it was built. Incumbent George Smally licensed 31st October 1834. Appointment with the Proprietors. No house. £200 per annum from rents of pews'. Apparently George Smally held the vicarage of Debenham, Suffolk. There is a note on this document 'came too late'. There is no reference to this application in the Minute Book and no correspondence on the Commissioners File.

No further meetings of the directors or the proprietors were minuted until 6th May, 1835, when the solicitors reported that a mortgage had been arranged for £2,000 and this sum was received on the 27th May when Mr. Becket was paid £450 for the ground, which was then conveyed to the trustees and mortgaged by them. At the same meeting Mr. Jenkins, the architect, was ordered to report in writing 'on the great excess of expenditure over the estimated contract and what part he had approved and certified'. There was also trouble over the upholstery of the seating, which was badly affected by moth. Various small accounts were paid, including £200 on account to the builder.

On the 13th August 'the Wardens were requested to confer with the

¹⁹ Church Commissioners File 2941, St. John proposed district out of Milton.

THE PROPRIETORY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

Minister on the immediate establishment of a Sunday School of not less than 6 to be appropriately dressed and to attend Divine Service on Sundays and aid in responses and Psalms'. Mr. Jenkins was again requested to furnish particulars and as a result he and Mr. Wood, the builder, attended on the 20th August and there was a long dispute with the directors. Finally, Mr. Jenkins retired from the meeting and when the directors wished to consult him again, they found that he had left for London. Mr. Wood agreed an abatement of £389, leaving a balance due to him of £1,300 5s. 11d.

At the second annual meeting of the proprietors held on the 30th November, 1835, it was reported that the Chapel had cost £7,142 19s. 5d., but no details are given. The current account showed £400 18s. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. collected in rents, etc., with payments of £300 17s. 6d., uncollected £29 9s. 6d. and a balance of £40 11s. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in hand but again no details are given. There were difficulties over the collection of unpaid calls.

On the 11th December, it was reported that the minister was in great pecuniary difficulties and that some debts might 'affect his usefulness as minister' and that he had gone to London to try to raise funds. This matter caused divisions among the proprietors and memorials for and against the Rev. Smally were presented to the directors. The wardens, Messrs. Gladish and Brenchley, stated that they could not again attend the chapel during Mr. Smally's ministry. Mr. Smally was instructed to furnish the wardens with an account of the sacrament money. On the 19th February, an extraordinary meeting of the proprietors resolved 'That whilst this meeting deeply regrets the circumstances in which the Revd. Geo. Smally is placed it does not feel itself called upon to pronounce any opinion upon the subject of the pecuniary claims which are alleged to exist against him still less to seek in consequence thereof the removal of the Revd. Gent. from the Chapel in which he has uniformly preached the Gospel and advocated with equal zeal and ability Doctrines pure and Orthodox and Evangelical'.

No further meetings are recorded until June when once more the finances of the chapel were causing trouble, the treasurer was 'in advance' about £65, and there were outstanding claims of £700 and upwards; it was agreed to try to borrow a further £500 and share defaulters were to be pressed or their shares forfeited.

On the 2nd August the Town Clerk refused to pay the Corporation pew rents and requested the return of the Mayor's Prayer Book and on the 16th August the directors ordered that the Mayor's Prayer Book be forwarded to the Corporation on payment of the pew rents in arrear from the Corporation and on its being ascertained that the Corporation had paid for the book (as appears to have been the case from the Corporation's Accounts). At the same meeting, it was

reported that the Town Clerk Mr. Combe owed £215 on his five shares and he offered £65 in cash and promissory notes of £50 at three months and £100 at six months. In an effort to raise funds Mr. Smally was asked to apply to some popular minister to preach a sermon forthwith in aid of the funds of the chapel and to make arrangements for quarterly sermons and collections in aid of funds. At the same meeting it was agreed to raise a loan of £500 from the Licensed Victuallers Fire and Life Assurance on condition that the chapel was insured with them.

Three attempts were made to hold the annual general meeting in 1836 without success due to lack of a quorum. The meeting was finally held on the 17th January, 1837, when for the first time a detailed account appears in the minute book including both capital and income accounts. This shows a total capital cost of £7,120, including £5,300 paid to the builder, £628 for furniture and fittings and £480 for the land. £4,750 had been raised from 95 shares (but less £140 unpaid calls), £2,000 on mortgage and £500 loan from the Licensed Victuallers. There was a debit on the current account of £95 and liabilities outstanding of £135.

A resolution was passed that the income of the company was not sufficient to meet the current outgoings or charges for interest and that 'an equal abatement per centum be made on the amount of such salaries and emoluments as may be found necessary'. At the next meeting of the directors Mr. Smally attended and assented to the resolution. The first quarterly sermon was to be preached on Sunday week next and Mr. Smally offered to provide 250 placards. On the 27th April, there was a meeting with Mr. Jenkins and the directors offered him £131 13s. 4d. in settlement of his account, but he wanted £180.

In June, Mr. Smally offered to resign and was paid up to date but carried on until August being paid £2 2s. 0d. per Sunday. The directors advertised that they were ready to receive proposals for 'serving the Chapel' but although several letters were received none was satisfactory. On the 25th September, the directors resolved to sell the Chapel by private tender and advertised it in 'John Bull', 'The Record', 'The St. James Chronicle', 'The Times', 'The Morning Chronicle', 'The Globe' and 'University Papers'. Various offers were received including one of £6,000 from the Rev. G. M. Marriott, who signed a contract and a note for £1,000. The bill was dishonoured and after considering proceedings the directors decided to release Mr. Marriott from his contract. The treasurer reported that he had insufficient funds to pay the interest on the loans. In March, various offers were received to lease or buy, including one from Mr. Raphael of £3,500. In May, the Archdeacon of Rochester intimated that he was interested in purchasing the chapel for Milton Parish, but the directors had entered

THE PROPRIETARY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

into a lease at £200 per annum to a Mr. Crouch with a possible purchase at £4,000, later raised to £5,000.

In May, the Treasurer reported liabilities of £600 with about £60 in hand, and it was agreed to apply to the Licensed Victuallers for a further loan of £600. This was not forthcoming, but the Surrey, Kent and Sussex Bank was prepared to lend £600 on a promissory note of two or more directors or proprietors.

In March 1839, an offer to purchase was received on behalf of Mr. Widdrington, but the directors would not accept less than £5,000 'and there is no objection to the consecration but the Directors will guarantee to procure that'.

On the 30th April, a list of debts was produced amounting to £698 12s. 5½d., including about £208 in legal fees and £216 due to Mr. Jenkins. No further meetings are minuted until the 10th December, 1839, when it was agreed to settle with Mr. Jenkins at 'about' £170 and to give a bill to Messrs. Matthews and Pearson (the solicitors) due in twelve months. The Licensed Victuallers gave notice calling in their mortgage at Christmas. Again no meetings are recorded until 15th July, 1840, when it was reported that Mr. Saddington had taken over the Licensed Victuallers mortgage. At the same meeting the Revd. Mr. Kyles, Mr. Duval and Mr. Southgate attended on behalf of Mr. Widdrington, who then apparently held the lease of the chapel and said he did not intend to renew it or purchase the freehold as provided in the lease. Mr. Widdrington's farewell sermon, preached on the 23rd February, 1840, was printed.²⁰ It is addressed from The Manor House, Bexley, and he concludes with a 'few words on the Chapel' pointing out that funds failed to provide against current expenses, 'a labourer is worthy of his hire and although he wanted not your silver or gold another may not have the same means to do so'. He points out that it was his hope to have had the church made parochial and had offered a price 'which pecuniary prudence would not justify but which the Proprietors refused due to their great expense' and that the Rector was willing to do all in his power and the Rev. Diocesan was willing to consecrate but money alone was required and he exhorts the congregation to use every effort to buy the church. There is a small block of the chapel in this book.

A meeting of the proprietors on the 30th November, 1840, authorized the directors to sell at not less than £5,000, 'care being taken that the Chapel be retained for the purposes of the established church' and this was carried unanimously.

²⁰ A farewell discourse preached in St. John's Chapel, Milton-next-Gravesend, on Sunday Night, 23rd February (1840), by Rev. Sidney Henry Widdrington, B.A., of Magdalen College, Cambridge, 1840. Whittaker & Co., Ave Maria Lane. J. Dunkin & Son, 10 New Road, Gravesend and Dartford. W. Newman, 61 High Street, Gravesend.

Negotiations continued during 1841 and various offers were made from Mr. Kyle and a Mr. Gardiner. In 1842, the Bishop of Rochester threatened to withdraw his licence.

On the 15th June, 1842, an extraordinary general meeting of the proprietors was held 'To authorise the sale of the Chapel and all the fittings and furniture belonging thereto to the Revd. W. J. Blew, Curate of St. Anne's, Westminster, for the sum of £4,000 – To dissolve the Company and appoint five or more to settle accounts etcetra'.

At this meeting a letter was received from a Mr. Rawlins offering to purchase at £4,000. Whereupon the meeting resolved to sell the chapel by public auction within one month in London 'without restriction of price or any condition'.

The chapel was put up for sale at the London Auction Mart on the 21st July, 1842, by Mr. Eversfield, a local auctioneer. There is a copy of the particulars of sale in a bound volume of auction particulars in the Gravesend Library and also in a file at the Church Commissioners.¹⁹ After setting out its cost 'exceeding £7,000' and giving details of the building and the fittings and furnishings, including the communion plate, it gives the population of Milton at 9,277, church for only 450 (St. George's, Gravesend, which was much nearer than Milton Church is ignored) and continues: 'The absolute necessity for this additional place of worship is therefore obvious and under the superintendence of a zealous, discreet and able minister will prove of vast benefit to the community and afford a stipend commensurate with the talents and exertions put forth. The Purchaser will not be restricted on the appropriation of the edifice to any particular purpose.'

A reserve was fixed of £4,190 but was not reached and, on the 30th August, a meeting of the proprietors authorized the sale to the Rev. W. J. Blew for £4,000. This time it was resolved to sell unanimously but that the company should not be dissolved until after completion of the sale and audit of the accounts.

The book concludes with the minutes of a meeting of the directors on the 16th November, 1842, when the solicitors were instructed to prepare a proper release and indemnity to the conveying parties of the chapel to the Rev. Mr. Blew and the trustees and directors were to be convened to sign the deeds on Wednesday next. Two sheets then appear to have been torn out. They may have been blank as there are two more sheets partly torn but clearly blank. There is one more sheet with entries on both sides, starting from the end but the other way up, and containing lists of shareholders but the first and last sheets of shareholders appear to be missing. From these two sheets it would seem that most of the shareholders subscribed for one share of £50. Three shareholders subscribed for five shares, one for four, two for three and four for two and the rest for one each. Eight of the

THE PROPRIETORY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

shareholders were landowners, and twelve were from Gravesend. There is no indication of whether anything was repaid to the shareholders but, in view of the company's indebtedness, it seems unlikely.

The Rev. William John Blew who purchased the chapel was born on the 13th April, 1808, son of William Blew. He was educated at Great Ealing School (where he was a contemporary of the future Cardinal Newman and his brother) and Wadham College, Oxford, where he graduated B.A., in 1830, M.A., in 1832. He became deacon in 1832, priested by the Bishop of Chichester, 1833. The archdeacon at the time was the Rev. Henry E. Manning, the future cardinal, who was received into the catholic church in April 1851. Blew served as curate at Nuthurst, Sussex, 1832–1840, and St. Anne's, Westminster, 1840–1842.²¹ He was a classical scholar and published translations from Homer (Iliad Books (i) and (ii), 'Hymn to Delian Apollo' and 'Bacchus with the Rovers') and Æschylus ('Agamemnon the King') in English verse. His church works included 'Crises of Common Prayer', 'Lost Gospels', 'Daily Service of Common Prayer 1548, the Second Year of the Reign of King Edward VI The Altar Service for that year'.²² He was also the editor of 'the Church Hymns and Tune Book 1852' (Second edition 1855). These hymns were mostly translations by the Rev. Blew, which he wrote between 1845 and 1852 and printed on flysheets for the use of his congregations at St. John's. Church Hymns was the Tractarian Society's hymn book and was used at St. George's, Gravesend, for many years.

There was no local paper for Gravesend during the time that the Rev. Blew was at St. John's and the only local record of his ministry is a small booklet amongst the Gravesend Corporation Archives entitled 'St. John the Evangelist, The Rise and Progress of Catholicity in the Borough of Gravesend' by an Old St. John's Boy.²³ The unknown author writes: 'Mr. Blew was a man who carried out the Anglican Service with decorum and beauty – Choral Matins and Evensong daily, Choral Litany on Wednesdays and Fridays at noon – no mean thing in those days! The choir boys were well trained (under Dr. Gauntlett) in Gregorian as well as in classic and other Anglican Music and there were always the anthems rendered on Sundays. The men's choir consisted of 12 voices and 20 boys. Mr. Blew's first sermon was taken from First Epistle Corinthians 1 v. iv, "Let all things be done decently and in order".'

A contemporary guide-book²⁴ contains the following note on a new

²¹ Crockford 1884. John Julian (Ed.) *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, Vol. 1, 149, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 2nd ed. 1907, reprint 1957. *D.N.B.*, Supplement, 1901, 218.

²² *British Museum Catalogue of Printed Books*, 861, and Crockford, *op. cit.*

²³ Gravesend Corporation Archives Gr./Z.9.

²⁴ 'The Pictorial Guide to Gravesend', n.d. but c. 1845.

bell at St. John's, 'The Legend and scroll of the new bell at St. John's next Gravesend, weighted and raised on the morrow of St. Michael 1843.

'Huc ades atque cito bone vir (scelerator abito!)
'Dulce sonare meum,
tu benere DEUM.
Me Thomas Conflabit
Willielmus hic Collocabit;
Hoc in Anno Domini
(1843)
Sancto sit laus Huius Nomini
Alleluia!
Thomas Mears me fecit Londini!

This monkish Latin may be rendered:

'Hither haste good Christian Man
(Hence Godless Churl away!)
'Tis mine to sweetly sound and kneel thou
Before thy God and pray.
Thomas cast me with his hand,
William raised me where I stand,
In this year of Christ's record
(1843)
Alleluia!
Praise the Lord
Thomas Mears of London made me!'

There is in the Church Commissioners file for St. John's¹⁹ a letter from the Rev. Blew asking for papers for the constitution of a parish and endowment of the church and a letter returning these forms dated the 29th October, 1844. The forms state that the application had the approval of the 'clergy' and the Bishop of Rochester and the Rector of Gravesend (there is no mention of the Rector of Milton, presumably he was already involved with Holy Trinity).

The application states that the Rev. Blew intended to offer St. John's Chapel as a parochial church with sittings for about 1,000. There was no provision for a stipend, but the Rev. Blew intended to provide funds for a house. There would be 'as many free sittings as may be agreed' and patronage should be in the Bishop of Rochester. In giving particulars of the Milton Church sittings he states that 'free bench seats are in the middle alley and the pews although not leased are all appropriated, accommodation 400'.

The Rev. Blew appended an additional statement setting out that the

THE PROPRIETARY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

chapel was built in 1834 at a cost exceeding £7,000, there was a gallery and sittings for 1,000, a vestry, organ, three stoves, gas fittings and communion plate 'all complete'. The building was 120 ft. × 60 ft. in an area planted with shrubs and trees, with dwarf wall and railings. Mr. Blew was willing to provide a font and alterations of sittings as necessary. He estimated the current charges of organist, pew opener, etc., was £200 per annum.

He concludes, 'with the Daily and other Full Services appointed by the Church added to the care of a large district which I propose taking on myself I shall be under the necessity of keeping a curate and shall consequently be subject to such further yearly disbursement, I propose a schoolroom for boys, a foundation now 20 in number for whom I have provided at my own cost and instructed in Latin, writing, cyphering, geography and in plain song of the Church in which the congregation may join.' A map of the proposed parish shows the bounds as Milton Road, Windmill Street, Lacey Terrace (Clarence Place) and Love Lane. With the addition of an area to the south altering the southern boundary from Lacey Terrace to Old Road East this was the parish later allotted to Christ Church.

There are no indications on the file of what happened to this petition and there are no remarks on it. Unlike the other Gravesend church files, both copies of the application remain on the files as if no action were taken. Perhaps the application by Holy Trinity in the previous year prevented action being taken here.

There are two files relating to Holy Trinity, Milton-next-Gravesend. The main one 15946(6) and a smaller one 4695(25), which deals mainly with the constitution of the parish and to some extent duplicates 15946. Apart from the letters mentioned above in 1832 and 1833, this file starts with a letter from the rector of Gravesend, the Rev. Robert Joynes, enquiring where and how an application could be made for a gift of ground in Milton to build a new church for the parish. On this there is no comment, but it is followed by the auction particulars for St. John's and then, a year later, on the 28th July, 1843, there are completed forms of application by the Rev. John Stokes, rector, and the Rev. W. D. Johnstone, curate, the church wardens Adam Park (brother of the explorer Mungo Park) and William Spess (?) and sixteen inhabitants of Milton parish. There is a rather slighting reference to St. John's, 'There is no consecrated Chapel in the said Parish but there is an unconsecrated Chapel therein lately having Proprietors in shares and now held by an individual'. The Board of Ordnance had promised to grant a site, which was duly conveyed to the church and the conveyance registered by the diocesan registrar on the 23rd May, 1845. The foundation stone had been laid by the Archdeacon of Rochester on the 14th May. (He had previously made



Fig. 2. Holy Trinity Church, Milton-next-Gravesend, c. 1860 (Gravesham Public Library Collection)

an unsuccessful bid for St. John's.) On the 4th December, 1845, there is a certificate of completion signed by the minister, church warden and local committee and also the architect, James Wilson, F.S.A. The Bishop dedicated the building to the Holy Trinity on the 21st August, 1845. The total cost was £4,200, there were 1,000 sittings, 600 of them free. £600 was granted by the Commissioners, £400 by the Church Building Society, £2,055 17s. 11d. was subscribed, including £150, by the Commissioners of Customs to whom twelve seats were allocated for customs officers and fourteen seats were allotted to the Board of Ordnance. On the 22nd October, 1856, there was a memorial to the commissioners to allot 200 of the 600 free seats 'to persons willing to pay' to help pay off the outstanding debt which amounted to £1,200.²⁵

The church was cruciform and built in 'decorated gothic' with a tower at the south-west end of the nave to which it formed a porch (Fig. 2). The proposed spire was never built although it appears in an illustration in the *Illustrated London News*.²⁶ It was built of ragstone with Caen-stone dressings and a slated roof. Its appearance did not meet with approval from the Ecclesiological Society, and the following note appeared in *The Ecclesiologist*: 'The new church at Gravesend is one of considerable pretence but is full of grievous architectural faults. The plan is a straddling cross without aisles and a tower affixed to the

²⁵ Church Commissioners File 4695, Holy Trinity, Milton-next-Gravesend.

²⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 25th May, 1844.

THE PROPRIETARY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

west end of the south side. The style is intended to be middle pointed: the windows are full of tracery but not one of them has the least vestige of mouldings; on the contrary they display nothing but vulgar splays. The architect has, however, tried to make up for this defect by the multiplicity of grotesque heads the size of life which he has bestowed upon the building, no less than seven heads being found upon a fantastical vestry at the north side. The tower is capped with pinnacles and the west door and window are under an arch. Only one transept, however, has an end door. Internally the chancel corbels (for there is a chancel) grow to pretentious magnitude and the windows have no hoods. The transepts and west end carry galleries. The seats are open and the pulpit is of stone. There are no arches at the crossing of the transepts and the roof which is somewhat elaborate is that of a hall and not a church. We have the more regret in recording this church as another instance of good opportunities wasted because there was at one time reason to hope that a better design might have been adopted.²⁷

The next church to be built was St. James'. There is a letter from the Reverend R. S. Joynes (rector of Gravesend) to the Church Commissioners of the 23rd February, 1846, asking for forms of application for a new district in Gravesend parish and a reply from the commissioners stating that they would only entertain an application, if an endowment of £150 per annum was provided independently. An application followed on the 31st March giving particulars of the parish and that St. George's had accommodation for 860, of which 120 were free and a total population of 7,533 who were chiefly 'Bricklayers, Carpenters and Labourers chiefly of the humbler classes and contains very few persons of independent means'.²⁸

The Reverend R. S. Joynes died later in 1846 and was succeeded by his son the Reverend Robert Joynes who, in April 1848, enquired further as to his father's application and was told that the condition in the original letter must be adhered to. This apparently caused delay as a petition was not presented until the 20th February, 1849,²⁸ in which it was stated that the parish was prepared to raise £2,000, of which £1,400 had been promised, and an 'eligible site for the church had been obtained'. This was given by the Earl of Darnley. The estimated cost was £3,500 for 800 seats, 500 free. The architect was S. W. Dawks and the style 'decorated gothic of the XIV century with central tower'. It was built of Kentish ragstone with Bath stone dressings and covered with Bangor slates.

The total cost was £3,417 (under the estimate), made up of £3,067

²⁷ *The Ecclesiologist*, Vol. IV, MDCCCXLV. There is no comment in the *Ecclesiologist* on St. James' or Christ Church.

²⁸ Church Commissioners File 2940, St. James', Gravesend.

building, £150 architect, £200 wall; £2,026 was raised from subscriptions, £300 from the commissioners and £280 from the Church Building Society, leaving a deficit of £811. The work was started in July 1850 and was completed one year later when the building was licensed by the bishop. It was consecrated on the 11th June, 1852.²⁹

While St. James' was building, events at St. John's had taken a dramatic turn and the following report appeared in *The Times* on the 9th April, 1851. 'Suspension of a Clergyman of the Established Church. A strong sensation has been excited in the town of Gravesend in consequence of the suspension for six months of the Rev. Mr. Blew, minister of the Church of St. John, by the Bishop of Rochester. The report in the district is that the Bishop was originally applied to on the subject by Mr. Durval, churchwarden of the most Holy Trinity, and subsequently a correspondence took place between Lord Ashley, Mr. Durval and the Bishop. The result has been the suspension above mentioned ... the gravamen of his offence is the (sic) having subscribed an address to Dr. Wiseman got up by certain clergymen of the High Church Party in which those whose names are attached regret the manner in which he has been received in England, address him as 'your eminence', express respect for his person and office as 'a Bishop of the church of God' and state that the 'clamour of the many in his case is not to be regarded as the unequivocal voice of religion and the Church of England'. A similar report appears in *The Illustrated London News* for the 12th April and *The Tablet* for the same date, which expressed the hope that he would follow the example of the clergy of St. Saviour's and 'moreover bring his church which is his property with him'. Unfortunately, no record of this inhibition can be found by the Rochester diocesan registrars.

The 'Old St. John's Boy'²³ states that the address was signed by the major part of St. John's congregation and that, but for Lieutenant Durval, the Church (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church) would 'never have assumed the position she holds in the town at this day' (1884). Lieut. Durval appears briefly in the minute book of the company on the 15th July, 1840, when he was one of those who attended on behalf of Mr. Widdrington when the proprietors were informed that he did not intend to renew the lease. He was chairman of the local Ragged School and this probably provided his connection with Lord Ashley, or Shaftesbury, who was at this time a fanatical evangelical.³⁰ Lieut.

²⁹ Church Commissioners File 15701, St. James', Gravesend.

³⁰ For Lord Shaftesbury's evangelical views see Georgina Battiscombe, *Shaftesbury, a Biography of the Seventh Earl* (1974), 217-8, and Edwin Hodder, *The Life and Work of the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury*, Vol. II (1886), 324-40. For Cardinal Wiseman, see Brian Fothergill, *Nicholas Wiseman*, (1963) and W. Ward, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman*, *op. cit.*

THE PROPRIETORY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

Louis (or Lewes) Emmanuel Durval lived at 14 Harmer Street until 1875 and may have been connected with the establishment at New Tavern fort. He was also a member of the Gravesend and North Kent hospital committee.

The bishop of Rochester at the time was Dr. George Murray,³¹ who apparently inhibited the Reverend Blew from preaching or otherwise officiating in his own church. One of his last acts was the funeral of James West, a chorister, 'which surpassed in choral solemnity anything which had been heard at the cemetery'. Dr. Gauntlett³² was composer and conductor. This was on Low Sunday and for a few weeks other clergymen officiated. Mr. Blew, however, felt he could not continue in view of the bishop's attitude and the church was put up for sale. Cardinal Wiseman bought it for £4,000. Lewis Raphael (who owned Parrock Manor House and was the largest landowner in Milton parish) contributed £2,000. He had previously offered £3,500 for the church in March 1838, prior to its purchase by Mr. Blew.

After making certain alterations the church was re-opened on the 30th October, 1851, as a Roman Catholic chapel dedicated to St. John the Evangelist (in place of St. John the Baptist!) by the Lord Bishop of Southwark, Dr. Grant, and with a sermon by His Eminence the Cardinal Wiseman, Archbishop of Westminster.

Mr. Blew was present in the congregation, and the cardinal referred to his courage in the protest he had made which led to his suspension 'when the country rang with the basest and most atrocious calumnies upon the Catholic religion and when the Catholic bishops rose from their beds knowing they were to be exposed to another day of insults no one but the minister of the church they had just devoted to the worship of God had the courage to protest and say such conduct was unchristian but this christian courtesy was visited in unkindness by those who should have cherished it . . . he who had acted so generously at such a time would receive from his God blessing upon blessing'.³³ There was 'unseemly behaviour' at evensong by a crowd of 1,200 and, on Guy Fawkes day, 5th November, 1851, a procession made an onslaught on the church with fireworks, fireballs, rockets and stones, breaking every pane of glass in the Parrock Street windows. The

³¹ For a note on Dr. George Murray, see R. Arnold, *The Whiston Matter*, (1961), 32 and see K.A.O.D.R.c/A222 letter of Dr. Murray protesting at the establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

³² Gauntlett, Henry John, 1805-1876. Composer, organist and musician co-operated with Mr. Blew on Church Hymns and acted as organist at St. John's. *D.N.B.*

³³ *Maidstone Journal & South Eastern Intelligencer*, 4th November, 1851, which has a long report of the ceremony and a sarcastic reference to the building of 'the three east windows with the Kaleidoscopic patterns of yellow stars and blue diamonds (emblematical of old Star and Diamond feuds)'. This is a reference to the rival steamboat companies, which operated between Gravesend and London and in which some of the proprietors of the chapel were involved, and see above, n. 9.

borough magistrates refused to take action but Lord Petre, of Thorndon Hall, Essex, intervened with the Home Office to prevent further trouble. To prevent recurring trouble at the conclusion of services, Father Grundy, the parish priest, had to discontinue his conclusion of the service with a benediction and substituted 'an English hymn'.²³

Mr. Blew returned to London where he lived at 6 Warwick Street, Pall Mall. He never held another living or another church but continued to write books and pamphlets. He remained a High Church Anglican and died on the 27th December, 1894, aged 86.

It only remains to account for the remnant of Mr. Blew's congregation who remained Anglicans. Although Trinity Church was in sight of St. John's, it is not surprising that the St. John's congregation did not join them. At the time, Trinity was evangelical and there was an oral tradition when I first remember the church that it had been built with one aisle (gangway) so that it could not be used for 'Popish processions' although in the present century it became High Church and indulged in processions by reversing at the end of the aisle and at one time had the Stations of the Cross.

On the 13th October before St. John's was re-opened a meeting was held at the Town Hall under the chairmanship of the Rev. W. D. Johnson, rector of Milton, with Mr. Johnson, Mr. Baynes and the Rev. E. Stokes to whom were added Mr. Gladdish and Mr. C. A. Becket and Mr. Southgate, all of whom had been associated with St. John's, and also Mr. Pinching, of Milton. Those present promised subscriptions and there was a promise of £300 from the Earl of Darnley.³⁴

A further meeting was held on the 23rd December when it was agreed to set up three funds viz. (1) for an additional curate for Milton to look after the members, (2) a building fund, and (3) an endowment fund. From the minutes of a meeting held on the 21st January, 1852, it appears that a curate had been appointed at a salary of £150 per annum and it was agreed to pay 'the expenses for performance of Divine Service in the Room licensed for that purpose'. This room in Russel Street had been a Temperance Hall and later became the school room. It seated 200.

At a meeting held on the 12th May, 1852, it was reported that Mr. Carpenter,³⁵ who was employed on the restorations at Milton Church, had inspected the proposed site and suggested another higher up Wellington Street due to better land for foundations and the Milton

³⁴ Christ Church Minute Book from 1852, at present at the Church.

³⁵ As to R. C. Carpenter and W. Slater, see B. F. L. Clarke, *Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century*, (1938, reprinted 1969), and Charles L. Eastlake, *The History of the Gothic Revival*, (1872, reprinted with an introduction by J. Mordaunt Crook, 1970).

THE PROPRIETARY CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN, GRAVESEND

Park Estate Company had agreed to accept £104 for the site and the company evinced a desire to raise the same by subscriptions privately. This meeting agreed to apply to the commissioners for a grant and passed a resolution 'That the Committee being deeply impressed with the absolute necessity of the most hearty co-operation and self-denial of all who aid in the promotion of this cause will not adjourn without expressing its earnest hope that every person whose goods, labour or personal aid may be required (except in the actual building and fitting of the church) will cheerfully render such without further remuneration other than the expense actually incurred by them. . . .'

The Wellington Street site proved unsuitable due to the inability to purchase a small piece of land adjoining and finally it was agreed to buy a site in Love Lane from the South Eastern Railway. On the 9th February, 1853, Mr. Carpenter was asked to confer with the Trustees on providing a church with 500 seats, 250 free.

On the 31st May, 1852, a petition had been presented to the commissioners setting out the loss of St. John's church and that the petitioners were using the 'School Room' which would accommodate 200 and which had been temporarily licensed by the Bishop until the erection of the church which 'was much required'.³⁶

The church was built in the 'decorated style' of ragstone with Bath stone quoins and slated. It was intended to have a central tower with spire but funds did not permit this work to be carried out and the stump of the tower was given a saddleback roof. The builder was Charles Cobham, one of a local family of builders and architects. The architect was Richard Cromwell Carpenter, who died while the work was in progress. On the 5th April, 1855, the committee appointed William Slater to succeed him.³⁵

The church was opened on the 5th November, 1855, and consecrated by the Bishop of Rochester on the 5th August, 1856. There were 248 pews and 249 free sittings. The cost of the church was £2,669 17s. 5d. and the site cost £150. The Commissioners contributed £125. The Earl of Darnley and his family were very active in raising funds as well as subscribing themselves and the earl attended a number of committee meetings.

One of the original church wardens and an active member of the committee was George Matthews Arnold who had been church warden at Milton and was for fifty years K.A.S. local secretary at Gravesend. He was later a member of the town council and mayor on eight occasions.³⁷ In 1858, he and his wife were received into the Catholic Church by Cardinal Manning and he became a most active member of

³⁶ Church Commissioners File 15947, Christ Church, Milton-next-Gravesend.

³⁷ *Arch. Cant.*, xxviii (1909), p. xciii.

St. John's and responsible for removing the galleries, which later caused trouble in the structure of the church.

Of the new churches mentioned in this article only St. John's remains. Christ Church which was extended at the west end in 1864 became unsafe and was closed on the 3rd December, 1932. It was later pulled down and re-erected in Old Road East with a clerestory and dwarf battlemented tower. The ragstone at Holy Trinity deteriorated very badly and it was closed on the 15th April, 1962, and demolished. The site is now the Post Office car park. St. James' was closed on 3rd March, 1968, and offices now occupy the site. The demolition here was not due to the condition of the fabric although there had been some deterioration in the ragstone. Suffolk brick seems to have been a more durable material than Victorian Kentish ragstone although it cost far more to build.³⁸

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³⁸Half a mile to the west of St. James' Church was a fourth Victorian ragstone church, St. Mark's, Rosherville (architects H. & E. Rose). It was built and endowed complete with ragstone vicarage by the Rosher family in the Decorated style with much carving and embellishment although the north side, which was not visible from the road, was without mouldings. Opened in 1855, it deteriorated rapidly and an extensive restoration was carried out by W. & C. A. Bassett Smith in 1896 and the spire was restored in 1900. The ragstone, however, continued to 'melt' and the church was demolished in 1976 when it appeared that the ragstone was only a skin the walls being solid brick.