

The west porch through the years



The west porch built in 1881



The west porch iron cross replaced the original stone cross



The west porch built in 1881



The original west porch

The northern aisle, together with an outer porch at the west entrance, was built in 1873. In 1881 a west porch, with a gable and stone cross, was erected after Revd Fitz Wyrant's death in his memory, presumably replacing the original one. It replaced the old bell turret and the single service bell had to be rehoused at the same time. Between that time and around 2002 when the old west porch was taken down, an iron cross replaced the original stone one.

"Church architecture is not just about designing a practical building, it is also about beauty and belief." As early as 1998 there was a proposal for glass doors at the west end of the church to convey these ideas by opening the view from the street to the full length of the church, right up to the altar with its cross. The July 1998 Spire reported: "We have a beautiful church which we want to share with those who pass by. More than this, the glass doors would also state that this church is open and welcoming. It is a church which is active in proclaiming the mission and purposes of God in our community. Glass doors would help to open up the mystery of God's presence in our world."

St James's Church is an important building for many people. For those who worship there it is a sacred place where God is known and where every member of the Body of Christ can feel at home. It is a much prayed-in building and one which makes the presence of God known in the community. For others who pass by it is obviously a church but, from Park Road and from the important turning into St James's Road, it used to look rather dead.

The building also had limitations for expanding the church's mission in today's world. More room was desperately needed for administrative work to be undertaken and for one-to-one confidential conversations, and there was a desire to create a building which reflected an attitude of openness to the world. The name 'Opening Our Doors' was synonymous with the aims of the project and would help to achieve one of the key Mission objectives, that of supporting the growth of newcomers, those on the periphery and regular attendees. There were many varied meetings during 2000 and 2001 to consider a range of ideas. Property needs were carefully considered as part of an extensive reconsideration of the Mission Action Plan. The church's architect was asked to help in achieving the MAP's aims and eventually the first proposals were drawn up.

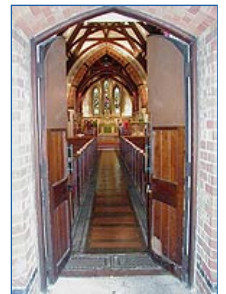
The plan created:

- A view from the street through the whole length of the church to show that it was an open and active organisation.
- A place for the administrative load of the parish to be securely and effectively undertaken, and allowing the church to be staffed and open much more of the time.
- A small room for work with individuals.
- Compliance with accessibility legislation.

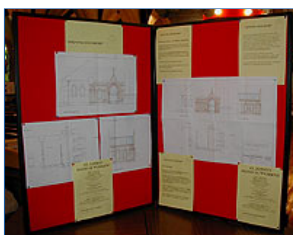
The plan envisaged removing the current west porch, which was in a poor state and was not part of the original building. However, the architect suggested that the brickwork and stonework from the west front of the porch should be retained and re-used in the new scheme. The scheme blended well with the rest of the church and this would help in the planning process. A major difference, however, was that the new construction would be lit naturally by a glass roof which would create a light and welcoming space.



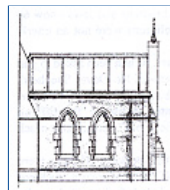
The old west porch doors



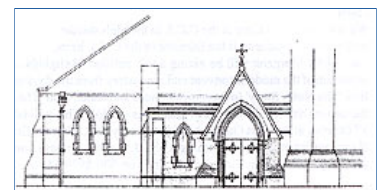
The original restricted view



The development plans



North Elevation



West Elevation

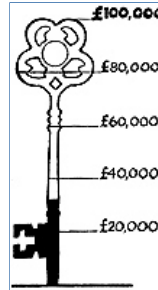
June/July 2002 - The official launch of the project to develop the west porch

The project was named 'Opening Our Doors' and was introduced more widely at the Jubilee Open Day in June. Inside the church there were spire tours, bell ringing, Victorian clock mechanism, an exhibition of local history, parish records and an exhibition of robes and embroidery. In the church courtyard there was a BBQ, treasure hunt, tombola, a cake stall, a drinks stall and a barrel organ. In the church hall garden there was a bouncy castle, face painting, biscuit making and a lollipop game. Throughout the day, official opening and throwing of the buns from the spire and the jubilee photograph.

We're Open to God, Open for you



The festival weekend



The story of our community



Bouncing fun



The Concert
by The Apocalypse Singers
and Orchestra



The story of our community

A [Festival Weekend & Launch of 'Opening Our Doors'](#) was organised in July, not only to celebrate St James's Day, but also to launch the project officially. It was hoped that planning permission would be granted in September, tenders issued in October and most of the fund raising done by December. The target was £100,000, with the hope that a third would come from events and donations, a third from charities and grants, and the remaining third from church reserves.

November 2002

After a series of very successful fundraising events, including the St James's Day Family BBQ, a Spire to Spire Sponsored Cycle Ride to Chichester, a Dream Auction, and a number of personal donations, funds reached the magnificent total of £30,000 - nearly a third of the way to achieving the target.

To help keep everyone up to date with how the 'Opening Our Doors' project was progressing, the symbol of a Key was developed, and the amount raised was added to it and updated each month in the magazine. 'Opening Our Doors' Key badges were designed. By wearing a badge people could not only help the project financially but also hopefully help spread the message about the project and its aims to the wider community.

January 2003

The Key showed that over £40,000 of the £100,000 needed had already been raised, a very encouraging position to be in at the start of the year. However, the large copper beech tree outside the church was causing a problem with the planning application because the planned foundations would interfere with its roots. This was to result in a delay and some extra cost.

March 2003

The Tree Trust had been asked to provide guidance on the options available in relation to the beech tree that was holding up the planning application to the Council. Many people wrote to the council or signed a petition, and everybody continued with the campaign. Fundraising events continued and included a Quiz Night and David Brodowski's Concert. The Apocalypse Singers, conducted by Christopher Hodges sang Songs of Springtime: Seven Elizabethan Poems E J Moeran and then Three Partsongs from Opus 17, to poems by Robert Bridges Gerald Finzi. Martin Hinckley played Five Bagatelles by Gerald Finzi on the clarinet accompanied by Pamela Phillips and Christopher Hodges, baritone, sang Earth and Air and Rain by Gerald Finzi accompanied by Pamela Phillips. There was also a Roving Supper where groups of six

to eight people ate a starter in one house, moving on to another house for the main course and then to the church hall for a sweet.



Christopher Hodges and Pamela Phillips



The Apocalypse Singers



Martin Hinckley and Pamela Phillips

July 2003

By now, the amount raised nearly reached an amazing £50,000. Despite a great deal of effort, no money at all could be raised from grants, but there was a windfall in the form of a developer buying out a covenant owned by the church, some of which the PCC agreed would be put towards the project.

It took much longer than expected to get the planning permission, firstly because the plans had to be modified to keep the building a little further away from St James's Road, and then because of the concerns about the beech tree. This meant that the application had to be withdrawn and resubmitted with a report from the church's own tree expert. Then, more than twenty parishioners packed into the Salon at York House for the local authority Planning Committee meeting on Thursday 22nd May to support the vicar, Revd Leathard, the church's tree expert, Derek Patch and the architect, Ian Stewart, in their bid to get planning permission passed. The application also had the support of parishioner Cllr Sallie Colak-Antic, and Cllr Malcolm Eady. The Council's tree officer's objections were overturned, so, with some conditions, the project could proceed.

The architect sent out tender documents, an application for a Faculty from the Diocese went ahead, and it was hoped to start building as soon as possible. The Bishop visited the church on St James's Day, 13th July 2003, and turned the first sod.



Bishop Michael



Bishop Michael blessing the West Door



Bishop Michael turning the first sod



Processing through the West Door

October 2003

Following the granting of planning permission, the architect drew up more detailed plans and a new specification that went out to potential tenderers. However, tenders from the builders were much higher than the budgeted amount of £80,000 – they varied from £139,000 to £180,000 for the building works, which would take from 16-26 weeks. The intervention of the Council's tree specialist was responsible for a good deal of the extra cost. This was obviously enormously disappointing and meant that the tendering or building specification would have to be modified.

November 2003

A meeting was arranged with the architect to discuss possible ways of bringing the costs down. He suggested an alternative roof window mechanism that was less expensive. It was decided that the lavatory, which was part of the original plans, would not be included as there were already very good disabled-access facilities in the church hall. It was also decided that internal decoration could be carried out using volunteers. However, it was agreed that the design of the doors should not be changed, as the concept of seeing right through glass doors from street to beautiful interior was most important.

Spring 2004

The PCC formally accepted the revised tender from the contractor DML Ltd, and authorised the architects Carden & Godfrey to draw up a contract based on this tender. The Faculty application was sent to the Diocesan Advisory Committee, and the architect and contractor visited the site. In March 2004 DML started work on the site. The contract was signed in April 2004. Then the existing porch was demolished in preparation for the new building and the stonework, tiles, some of the brickwork and various fixtures and fittings were kept to be used in building the new greatly enlarged porch.



Summer and Autumn 2004

The building of the walls was started in June but only some of it was to plan. When the walls reached about two metres high, St James's realised that the walls were being built in the wrong place and so out of position with mistakes in the positioning of doorways, windows and buttresses. The architect also became dissatisfied with the quality of workmanship in the bricklaying and there were various other problems. This was pointed out to the contract administrators and the builders and building was stopped until all this could be resolved. Work ceased and there was a long pause while many meetings took place between the architect, the contractors and the steering group. The whole process was unbelievably difficult and required a good deal of negotiation, led by the steering group, who had to fight rising costs and minimise disruption and delay. There had to be an adjustment of the position of the west wall which required extra piling. This resulted in some delay which meant that the project was behind schedule by about four weeks. Eventually St James's was reassured that the problems had been solved so the original walls were redismantled to ground level, and it was agreed that building should recommence in February.



February 2005

The work did restart in February and once the piles and the base were complete the walls started to grow fairly rapidly. There was proper supervision, correct materials and a bricklayer of sufficient skill to do the work to the required standard. The immediate effects were not dramatic because the correct setting up was a slow yet important part of the process. The first courses of bricks were put in place, and the existing brick and stonework that would form part of the internal walls of the new building were cleaned.

Spring/Summer 2005

Gradually during this period the building works progressed well and all could see the development of the new extension. The brickies finished the brickwork and the master bricklayer has done a fine job on the red rubber bricks around the arch. The electricians sorted out all the electrical fixings. BT installed their connection, carpenters, glaziers, roofers and most particularly the installers of the fine roof lights all did their work. A group of volunteers decorated the interior and finally the project was announced complete and a great success.

October 2005

The Bishop of Kensington officially opened the new west porch by throwing open the glass doors and leading the community into church for Parish Communion. Read the article [Our Doors are Open](#). The doors succeeded in giving a view from the road down the whole length of the nave to the chancel with its newly floodlit altar, together with the ongoing life within, thus fulfilling the vision of opening up the church for all to see and join in.

The above information covers the period from when any records could be found until November 2016. This was when Revd Derek Winterburn became St James's tenth vicar and from this time onwards any new information can be found on the main site.

