

The Fryerns Baptist Church Mural

Fryerns Baptist Church

Fryerns Baptist Church was opened on the 21st November 1953. The first and founding minister was Pastor Charles B. Phillimore. The church was founded by The **Metropolitan Association of Strict Baptist Churches** (later named renamed **Association of Grace Churches South East [A.S.B.C.S.E](#)**) and the National Federation of Strict Baptist Churches. The land purchase to erect a church in Basildon district was after two churches in London were burnt down. A bungalow was erected initially as the first building which was later followed by the church building. With renewed zeal for evangelism and a desire to reach Basildon with the gospel there were persistent gospel mission outreaches into the community.

The Mural

The Mural, painted by Lewis Lupton in 1954, depicts the birth and growth of the Strict Baptist Denomination... The denomination is depicted as a tree, its knarled old trunk indicating trials and difficulties during its growth. The tree has its roots in the Bible, one page of the Old Testament and one of the New.

- **The central figure** represents a portrait shown to the pilgrim in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* at the house of the interpreter " a man with eyes lifted up to heaven, the book of books in his hand, the law of truth written upon his lips standing before the world as if pleading with men".

He symbolises the preacher who tells of the love of God and proclaims the Good News. As a result of the work of the preacher the tree grew and so has branches.

- **Area I**

Hymns – Hymns were introduced in 1691 by Benjamin Keach who wrote a book about hymn singing supporting his argument with scripture. At first they only sang one hymn at the conclusion of the Communion service. Eventually after a period of 14 years they commenced singing every Sunday but only after the sermon. As shown in the mural at first they sang unaccompanied using a tuning fork to pitch the note. Then they started using a violin and eventually moved on to the organ or as one early critic termed it "a fearsome engine of music", which subsequently became the recognised instrument for use in chapels.

- **Area II**

Preaching in the chapels increased the numbers of believers and the church grew.

- **Area III**

Stands for theology and theologians, professors of doctrine, who taught what they believed the Bible said and codified what they believed was a correct interpretation of Scripture.

The bust is of William Kiffin a member of the first Baptist cause in London, date on the cup 1633. Another, Gifford lived in Bristol but attended the chapel in Devizes, Wiltshire and thirdly Dr Gill a Scotsman who had come to live in London.

- **Area IV**

Depicts missionary endeavour and the early taking of the gospel across the oceans to other lands.

William Carey a Northamptonshire cobbler saw the need of people in India and felt it was God's will for him to go there. He was turned down as a candidate but was so convinced

about God's call that he founded the Baptist Missionary Society and went as their first missionary to India in 1793. He learnt many languages and translated much of the Bible, he also compiled some dictionaries to help other missionaries. He was Professor of Oriental Languages at Fort William College Calcutta for 30 years. The top picture is of Strict Baptist missionary to India Dr Ruth Harris doing her rounds on a piebald horse. When the mural was painted in 1954, she was still in active service on the mission field.

- **Area V**

The struggle for thought and Freedom of Worship.

Agnes Snotth was burnt at the stake on the 31st January 1556 at Smarden in Kent for refusing to confess to a priest on the grounds that it was contrary to the scriptures. She was the last Baptist to be burnt for her faith in England.

John Calvin represents the Reformers ie: those who protested against the domination of the Roman Catholic Church and the restrictions of religious expression.

The Mayflower in which many Baptist as well as others fled to the newly discovered America in search of freedom of worship.

The Puritans who whilst wanting freedom of religion rigorously practiced their own interpretation of the Bible.

Many ordinary people were put in prison for their faith, indeed one of the first Baptist congregations was formed in prison in London.

Slavery is included because the first petition against slavery was drawn up by a Strict Baptist and although it was not successful it paved the way for William Wilberforce to fight for the liberation of slaves in parliament. The picture of chains falling off also symbolises the experience of salvation, in the words of the hymn writer "my chains fell off, My heart was free, I rose went forth and followed Thee"

The chapels depicted are 1) 17th Century Guildford 2) 18th Century Hartney Wintney Hampshire 3) A mission hall in Chobham Surrey 4) Fryerns 5) The Strict Baptist Open-air Mission van which used to go out every Saturday.

At the top of the mural is a sketch of John Bunyan baptising Agnes Beaufort by immersion in a mill stream.

The communion table with linked hands represents fellowship and unity of East and West in Christ and above is a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

(Taken from "The Sermon on the Mural" by Graham Phillimore delivered to the Fellowship of Youth at Fryerns Chapel on 31st December 1959.

Lewis Lupton stayed in the Manse (then in Holden Road) with the Phillimore family whilst working on the Mural in 1954.)

PS: Trivia: Did you know that this mural was once almost completely lost in the 1990s when due to vandalism the front door was broken and the mural was splashed with unknown substances?

*Well the mural was re-done by **Malcolm Mackinnon** and got a new coat of paint to meticulously restore it.*

The history the mural depicts is a constant reminder to the current generation of the necessity of the gospel in Basildon and the need to always keep praying that God would send us as his labourers for the fields are ready for harvest.