

## A Christ Church Colbury Ω

Welcome to Christ Church,  
Colbury.

The Church is open every day and is used for private prayer and meditation.

Christ Church serves the ecclesiastical Parish of Colbury which encompasses the civil parish of Ashurst and Colbury and parts of the open New Forest, mainly Denny Lodge Civil Parish.



The idea for the Church and the wherewithal to buy it were the gift of Frederick Ibbotson (1813-71). He gave the land for the church, paid £2,900 of the £3,000 cost of the building and endowed the living for the incumbent. Ibbotson was a businessman, born in Halifax, who lived most of his life in Yorkshire. When his wife, Marianne (1821-63), inherited the Barker-Mill estate, they moved to Hampshire and settled in Eling. Christ Church is said to have been built for the benefit of the estate workers. There is archival evidence that the Ibbotsons' daughter, Marianne, was actively involved in the church building project.

Christ Church was designed by the architect Benjamin Ferrey FRIBA (1810-1880), who studied under AC Pugin and was a lifelong friend of AN Welby Pugin. Ferrey was a zealous pioneer of the Gothic Revival architectural movement, of which Christ Church is a fine example.

The foundation stone was laid in 1869. Christ Church and its graveyard were consecrated on March 8th, 1870 by Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester.

The Church has changed little since it was built. It is constructed of flint dressed with Corsham stone, with a simple nave and chancel.

### Church Interior

The main entrance to the church today is through the porch at the north west door, this porch opens into an internal porch, complete with tiled roof. The **font** is positioned just inside the door to the left. On each side of the font is carved a stylised medieval head.



Olive Phillips, daughter of William and Jane, was the first baby to be baptised in the new parish on 4th December, 1872.

The main architectural feature of the Church is the **east window**, in memory of Marianne Ibbotson.

On a sunny morning, the church is bathed in colour from its stained glass.

The **First World War Memorial** on the north wall lists the names of the 18 men killed in that war. It is a reminder of the devastating effect of that war on small villages. Eight men from the village died in the Second World War. Their memorial is on the Colbury Memorial Hall at the bottom of Hounsdawn Hill.

The walls of the nave and chancel and the floor of the chancel are decorated with Victorian **encaustic tiles**, crafted by Maw & Co of Ironbridge. There are dozens of different designs. The repeated alpha, A, and omega, Ω, are references to Christ from Revelations 21:6 “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end*”.

Four stylised medieval heads are carved on the **chancel arch**; crowned male heads to the north and south facing each other; and above, overlooking the congregation two uncrowned heads. These heads are probably based on those at Eling Parish Church. Similar heads are incorporated into the chapel at Christchurch Priory designed by Pugin.

The edge of the **pulpit** is decorated with carved foliage, which is also seen on the tops of the capitals in the chancel arch, and at the base of the roof supports. At either side of the entrance to the pulpit are carved a dragon and a pelican. These carvings stem from the Arts and Craft movement, so closely linked to the Gothic Revival.

To the south of the altar is an **icon** of Christ, commissioned and dedicated in 2000. Christ’s words to the disciples after the resurrection adorn the eastern wall behind the **altar**. “*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Me*” (John 14:6) Here also is a rich mosaic and tiles decorated with dove on vine behind the altar.

Pevsner describes the interior of the church as: “Pleasant ... the windows Geometrical, the chancel, with tiling and motley colourful east window”. (N Pevsner & D Lloyd, ‘The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight’ 1967)

## Exterior

Pevsner describes the exterior as: “Quite an arty west front, with three buttresses rising from a gabled projection containing the w door; tapering gable bellcote with open traceried timbering and spirelet with four shingled pinnacles.”

The **Lych Gate** was erected following public subscriptions and a further contribution from Marianne Vaudrey-Barker-Mill, daughter of Frederick Ibbotson, as a memorial to those from the village who had been killed in the First World War. These included her son and heir William Claude Vaudrey-Barker-Mill.

The **Lady Chapel** abuts the Church on the south side. To the east of the Church **bomb damage** caused on October 1941 is visible. Notice the chip out of the cross commemorating the Brankstone Fletchers. The plain glass that had been put into the east window was also damaged.



The **churchyard** was expanded from its 1870 boundaries in 1937, when the Barker-Mill estate gave a substantial tract of land.

It is a **Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery**, with five graves of men killed during the Second World War.

South of the lych gate is the grave of Charles Shave, a railwayman, complete with carved train. To the east end of the cemetery are the colourful graves of travellers, whose families lived in Longdown Camp until 1960.

## **Vicarage and Church Rooms**

The Colbury Church Rooms, designed by Robert Potter, were built in 1970 on the site of the orchard of the original vicarage. The building cost £21,000, two thirds of which was paid by Peter Claude Vaudrey-Barker-Mill.

The original vicarage, also designed by Ferrey, is the flint faced building about 300 yards to the north of the church. The Diocese considered it too large and difficult to maintain, and it was sold.

The new vicarage, designed by David Trussler, was built in 1982. The pitch of the roof mirrors that of the Church. Its design is an attempt to “bring the whole complex into harmony.” (Boakes, N, 1984, *The Parish of Colbury: A Brief History*) Despite the different ages of the three buildings and the architectural schools that inform them, Christ Church, its vicarage and Colbury Church Rooms form a clearly linked group which may be termed the church close.

*Photographs courtesy : N.Burch, D.Hall.*

For further information please contact:  
The Church Administrator, Christ Church,  
Deerleap Lane, Colbury, Southampton,  
SO40 7EH.  
Telephone: 023 8029 2132.

