

## **St Peter's Church, Gustard Wood**

In December 1908, Wheathampstead Parish Magazine published a short article by the rector of St Helen's Church, Canon Owen Davys, stating that a suitable site had been found for a new church to be built at Gustard Wood. The same Owen Davys, who was (conveniently) also Lord of the Rectory Manor, formally approved that the land should be "conveyed for the above purpose to the Rector and Churchwardens of Wheathampstead and their successors". The cost of the proposed new building, which was to be of corrugated iron, was two hundred pounds of which £50 had already been promised so the article ended with an appeal for contributions towards the remaining £150.

Miss Olivia Upton Robins of Delaport (the large house and estate near the site of the church) "wrote to Mrs Pearce of Ayot House, Tunbridge Wells, whose husband, the Rev. W.P.Pearce was for eleven years Rector of Ayot St Lawrence, asking her if she would give £5. The reply to that request was most significant – 'for an iron church, I will give you nothing; but make it a permanent church and I will give you £1,000.'" The equivalent of some £80,000 today, this was enough to pay for a stone-built church.

The church was designed by Owen Davys' son, Mr F.Trevor Davys, built in less than six months, dedicated barely a year after the idea was first put forward, and is in use today.

Source: Rodney D. Locks (2010) *St Peter's Church, Gustard Wood; a living history in commemoration of 100 years 1910-2010*

Copies are available from both St Peter's and St Helen's churches.