

KEARNS HALL

It was in 1959 that plans were first discussed for a Hall at St Thomas's, to be known as Kearns Hall, after the donor of the Church and Curate's House. At this time steps were taken to create a Hall Building Fund. Until the Hall was built, all activities connected with the Church took place in the Congregational Church Hall – now the United Reformed Church Hall. This was not always satisfactory, although the United Reformed Church was very helpful, so it was realised that, for a full Church life, a hall was necessary.

From 1959 onwards, sales, coffee mornings etc. were held to raise money for the new hall and by 1963 the fund had reached £1000. Then suddenly, 'out of the blue', - as the local newspaper put it – came a cheque for £4,000 from an anonymous donor, so the £5,000 required for the hall was in hand. Within weeks, plans were being drawn up by Mr Oswald Franklin, a Birchington Architect, who gave his services free. With the professional help of Mr John Ballam and Mr Norman Ralph, the building was commenced.

In the following April of 1964, the foundation stone was laid by the Rev. Raymond Sheeky, one time curate at Birchington and who had started the Hall Fund going. In October of that year, the Hall was dedicated by the Ven. the Archdeacon of Canterbury, Canon A. Sargent.

Soon after it was opened, an anonymous donor gave £100 towards the furnishing of the Hall. The building has been a great asset to St Thomas's and the whole parish ever since. It is particularly valuable when the S.U. Mission comes down each summer for the Children's Services.

Alfred T. Walker : 1975. [Edited by Jennie Burgess 2008]