

Carbrooke Nativity Figures

During our recent Village Heritage weekend at the end of September, we decided to display our unique plaster figures which were commissioned for Carbrooke Church by Rev. George Chambers in 1928.

Unfortunately they had become more and more damaged, until in recent years we have not been able to display them, which was such a shame.

Having seen them again, members of the heritage group decided to renovate them. Brian Smith restored the chipped plaster work and re-created the 'Carpenter shop' setting, Enid Clarke, a well known local artist and sister of Brian, repainted the figures, and Chris Jenner their neighbour re-created the tools to scale, as Chris' original occupation was carpenter. Rene Smith (Brians wife) suggested the restoration and helped set up the display in the church along with Chris' wife Yvonne Jenner. The figures have now been completely restored, and look fantastic, in their new setting, we offer our thanks to Rene and Brian Smith, Enid Clarke, Chris and Yvonne Jenner, for taking this on.

They are not strictly 'Nativity figures', as Jesus is obviously not new born and the 24" figures are set in a carpenters shop, and dressed in 1920's style.

Father George was much loved by his congregation but as a Christian Socialist, who mixed with artists, liberals and Socialist MP's, often courted controversy, not only in Carbrooke but nationally. He commissioned the figures, created by his friends Mr and Mrs Murray-Smith. (Enid Clarke, although only a child at the time, remembers the Murray-Smiths around Carbrooke. They lived with Rev. Chambers and his wife Aline at the Vicarage whilst they were working on the figures. They were very Bohemian, with long hair, flowing clothes and sandals - which must have been quite a novelty in 1920's Carbrooke! At one stage the tools were controversially displayed to display the hammer and sickle iconography!

The figures have been a great feature in 'Carbrooke Christmas' tradition for older members of our community, and now they can continue on for our younger members.