When Bishop Hordern dedicated St Michael's Church in 1930 he said, "This is a new Church without any traditions. The people will lay the foundations."

St Michael's has been very fortunate in the quality of lay involvement over the years and were it not for the loyal and devoted service of so many people there would not be the lively Church community that we enjoy today.

After all the preliminary difficulties it was with great excitement that preparations were made for the laying of the foundation stone. On a fine autumnal afternoon on September 29th 1929, St Michael's Day, people could be seen hastening from all parts of Bexhill to attend the ceremony. Members of the town band bustled up with their instruments: the boys of the Beacon School were excitedly taking their places in a special roped enclosure provided for them. The rather sombre appearance of the building site with its scaffolding and greyish
foundations and small walls to first window height was about to be relieved by splendour and pageantry. In a
closeby house the Bishop of Chichester, Dr Bell, was robing and being introduced to the Mayor of Bexhill,
Councillor A Turner Laing. A dignified procession made its way to the building site and the town band struck up
the first hymn: "Christ is made the sure foundation". Standing in the crowd of onlookers was John Mendham,
the architect. A hush fell over the crowd as the Bishop prepared to speak: "Dearly beloved in the Lord, he
boomed, "we are gathered together here to lay the foundation stone of a building which we humbly trust may
in due time be consecrated as a House of God; and first let us praise God's Holy Name for the mercy and
goodness with which He has so far prospered our work; and let us further devoutly pray, that He will of his good
providence bless all who in any way contribute to its completion; that He will protect from danger those who
may be engaged in the building, that He will guide the architect and send His blessing upon our undertaking".

The eve of the Ascension May 28th 1930 dawned fair and once again a large crowd of people flocked
top Glassenbury Drive on a warm May evening for the service of dedication. There were many well-
known local figures present including the headmistress of Ancaster House, Miss Burrows, the Mayor
of Bexhill and his mace bearer. The congregation rose to their feet as the choir and clergy entered by
the South Door and moved in procession to the North Door. Then came the cross bearers Mr Fred
Smith and two acolytes bearing lighted candles followed by the Churchwardens, Mr R Clayton Heslop
and Mr E Sheather and Rev A E Harries, the Bishop's chaplain, and finally Bishop Hordern.

Amongst the clergy present was the Rev H S Box, now Canon Box and living in retirement in a clergy
home in Henfield. He recalled what a splendid sight the Bishop of Lewes was with the beautiful gold
embellishments in his cope. In a special form of service prescribed for such an occasion the Bishop
called upon the congregation to join him in asking God's blessing upon this our undertaking. As he
moved from dedicating the font to other parts of the Church, Bertram Weller on the organ, struck up
the vibrant notes of "We love the place O God". The choir for the occasion was St Peter's Choir made
up of the splendid bass voice of Mr Pocock, the butcher, Ernest Sheather (tenor), George Davis (bass),
Mr Lamb, Headmaster of the Grammar School (alto), Eric Bennett, Director of Bexhill Motors
(baritone), Mr Clayton Heslop, Headmaster of the Beacon School and such choir boys as John and Frank
Nichols, Derek Davis, Ivan Craigie, Roy Routledge (later to become a naval surgeon) Leslie Stuberfield,
Fred Colman, Fred Hayward, Walter Wright and Norman Saw (now of the Bexhill Observer).

At last the prayers and the singing ceased and an expectant congregation sat down to listen to Bishop
Hordern's sermon. What thoughts went through the minds of young John Nichols or Norman Saw as
they sat there? Perhaps they were reflecting that for once they would not be able to dash out of Church
as they usually did from St Peter's to spend their pennies at the Beehive sweet shop in Old Town. "It
is a very happy thing for a dedication service to take place on the eve of the glorious feast of the
Ascension" said Bishop Hordern. He asked people to think about the purposes of church going and
why it had been important to build a new church on Glyne Hill. He finished his sermon with some
prophetic words: "This is a new Church without any traditions. The people will lay the foundations".
Ninety years later it is possible to reflect that what has made St Michael's Church, a thriving Church
family has been the devoted service of scores of people. Though a community Church is not really a
new concept, St Michael's has given the idea new life in East Bexhill in the 1970's. The Bishop's address
was preceded by another hymn: "Pleasant are thy courts above". The Service concluded with a
collection and the singing of "Blessed City, Heavenly Salem". Representatives from the private schools
took up purses of money and they were followed by holders of the brick collecting boxes. Together
these completely filled the central aisle of the Church.

Bishop Hordern stayed on overnight to celebrate the first Eucharist at St Michael's which was held at 8
o'clock on the morning of Ascension Day May 29th. There were 88 communicants. Amongst the
archives of St Michael's is a vestry book which records all the services held at St Michael's from the
dedication until October 1953, and the first entries for the dedication and the Ascension are signed by the Bishop.

The Bishop of Chichester, Dr Bell, agreed to consecrate St Michael's Church on Wednesday October 11th 1933. The difference between dedication and consecration is that while dedication may be temporary consecration must be perpetual, making the Church permanently sacred so that it cannot be used in future as private property. No church can be consecrated until it is free of debt and mortgage.

So it was that on a fine evening in October 1933 the Bishop of Chichester knocked three times on the door of St Michael's Church with his pastoral staff to demand admittance. He gave the Church his peace and blessing. To the singing of a psalm his procession made its way to the chancel. Subsequently the font and the altar were blessed as well as the ornaments and vessels. The service reached an impressive climax when the Bishop signed the sentence of consecration which was read aloud to the congregation. "By the authority committed unto us in the Church of God, we set apart for ever from all common or profane uses this House, and whatsoever therein is consecrated by our prayers and benediction and dedication the same for the ministration of the holy services and mysteries of the Church". That sentence of consecration is preserved today in the historical records of the diocese. In his sermon the Bishop of Chichester used some prophetic words. He recalled that the Church had been pre-eminently built to serve the needs of the boys and girls from the schools. "Boys and girls" he believed, needed special consideration not only in the sermons they heard but also in the ordering of the service, the choice of prayers, the reading of the Bible and in the whole plan and manner in which the spirit of worship found expression".

Inscription reads:

To the Glory of God
This foundation stone was laid
The twenty-ninth day of September 1929
By A Turner Laing Esq
Mayor of Bexhill

HW Maycock
John B Mendham
Architect

WR Clayton Heslop
Ernest Sheather
Churchwardens