

**The History of the East Howe Congregational Churches and Burial Ground  
1834 - 2015  
Written By Ray Cozins**

**A Congregational Church comes to East Howe**

In 1834 Skinner Street Congregational Church, Poole found the funds to build a church at East Howe, in Headless Cross Lane (in 1920 this name was changed to East Howe Lane) and it was built to serve the spiritual needs of the farming communities in the area. It was the Poole Nonconformists who first sent out preachers to hold services in a cottage there in 1834. At the expense of ministers and members of the Skinner Street Congregational Church they built the first church in a small field which they leased for the purpose and the church seated just 50 people.

Minister John Bowhay from Muccleshell Congregational Church (now called Throop) travelled to preach at East Howe when the church first opened in 1834. The deed recorded that that the land that the church stands on was bought from a man named Jacob Hawkins. In the Richmond Hill Congregational Church records there is mention of a deed made for East Howe Church on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1834 that named 9 men as Trustees, Matthew Aldridge, James Aldridge, John Bishop Bunn, John Durant, John Smith Miller, Joseph Notting, James Kemp Welch, Lane Spelt and John Brown.

Matthew Aldridge owned a freehold house in Cinnamon Lane, Muscliffe and was an office holder of Holdenhurst Parish. He was a farmer and married to Elizabeth and they had 3 children, Elizabeth, Henry, and Emily plus 2 servants.

James Aldridge owned a freehold house, Throop Villa, Levitte Lane, Holdenhurst. He also was a farmer and married to Martha and they had a son William.

By 1954 the growth of Bournemouth changed the character of the East Howe village. In the years between the two wars and after the Second World War there was considerable private building and large Housing Estates being built around the East Howe area. It became clear that a further extension to the work of the church was needed so the members of the Richmond Hill Congregational Church, as part of their own church centenary celebrations, once again raised the money to build the third church with frontage onto Kinson Road, and it opened in 1956.

The Rev. Norman Goodchild was appointed minister in 1954 and worked at the church for ten years. Dr. Trevor Davies and officers of Richmond Hill Congregational Church met with members of the East Howe Congregational Church and presented detailed building plans for the proposed church. A large audience unanimously welcomed the plans and a proposal to proceed was made by Mrs. H. Knowles and seconded by Mrs. Budden. Mrs. Budden and her husband were the first to be married at the Saunders Memorial Church when it opened in 1905. Supporting the proposals at the meeting were Miss F. White and Miss Cherrett who had both been members of the East Howe Church for over 60 years.

In early 1956 a stone laying ceremony was held with 500 people attending. The open-air service was held in the skeleton of the building and foundation stones were laid by three gentlemen, the Rev. Dr. Trevor Davis, Mr. E. F. T. Ventress and Mr. H. J. Keeping. Mr. Keeping donated and laid the large stone at the church which had the inscription "This stone was laid by H. J. Keeping Esq. a life deacon of the church June 9<sup>th</sup> 1956"