

THE MESSENGER

THE PRISM PROJECT

Anyone living or visiting the Cator Estate cannot fail to notice the elegant church at the corner of Blackheath Park and Pond Road. St Michael and All Angels, to give its full name, has been on that site for nearly two hundred years. It is recognised as an architectural gem and has a grade II* English Heritage listed building status. Since being built, St Michael has been in the centre of the Cator estate, physically, spiritually and culturally. It has seen many christenings, weddings and funerals, from the cradle to the grave so to speak, of those who live in the Cator Estate, and further beyond. Many community events have taken place in St Michael in the recent past: flower and art festivals, concerts, as well as local schools' prize giving ceremonies. Every Friday, the church hosts a youth cafe, providing a safe, welcoming environment for young people to relax and to be with others of their own age. Like an old friend, it is easy to take for granted that St Michael's will continue to be there forever.

When you next walk along Blackheath Park, take a long hard look at the church building. You will notice that time has taken its toll. The stone work is beginning to deteriorate and crumble away.



The faces of the gargoyles have lost their definition.

Look at the beautiful East window on the tower facing Pond Road to see the cracks in the mortar and loss of definition around the edges of the window. Defects in the stonework have been investigated by specialist stonemasons. Weathered joints have allowed water to penetrate and to rust hidden iron cramps. When iron rusts, it expands generating enormous forces that fracture the stonework.



The tower and the spire, the Needle of Kent, once marked the boundary between London and Kent. On 14th October 1881, a devastating hurricane swept across the British Isles, causing the top of the spire to fall into Blackheath Park. Although we do not anticipate so dramatic an event, it is a salutary reminder to keep the church in good repair.

Our steeplejack regularly inspects the high level stonework, removing anything that is loose and potentially dangerous. This has left some pinnacles looking rather stunted.

The flint work of the boundary wall needs to be repaired and repointed, and new stone copings are needed along some stretches.

The Church of England requires that all its church buildings are inspected every five years. Our most recent report identified many repairs which needed to be done within 5 years and several which were very urgent, within 12 months.

Two members of the congregation, Carolyn Watkins, a retired architect, and Bill Lowe, a practising architect, have voluntarily spent several years working with a firm of chartered architects very experienced in church restoration. Between them, a schedule of repairs and conservation on the church building has been

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THE PRISM PROJECT (CONTINUED)

drawn up. Apart from structural repairs, Health and Safety improvements such as installation of harnessing equipment to enable better and safer access to the roof are to be included. Internally, plans are proposed to make the interior more energy efficient by replacing the antiquated heating and lighting, to improve access for the disabled and to make the entrances more welcoming to all who enter within. Residents in the Cator estate have been consulted and as a result of that consultation, the decision was made by the Parochial Church Council to keep the structure of the existing pews. The church equivalent of planning permission for the external conservation work has been granted. Permission for the internal works is being sought at the moment.

In February, an appeal was launched for funds for a project to Preserve, Restore and Improve St Michael; hence the project title: PRISM. The aim is to restore the building to its former glory and to bring its interior into the 21st century. The project is estimated to cost around £720,000. A group of members of St Michael's congregation has volunteered to help raise funds for the PRISM project. The group proposes to raise funds through a variety of ways.

We will be asking members of the congregation to pledge or donate sums of money, in addition to their regular giving. We will also ask people who live in the parish to assist generously to help restore St Michael, which contributes so much to the grace and beauty of the Cator estate. These will be through meetings hosted by friends living in the Cator estate. There will be a series of fund raising events planned throughout 2015. Look out for these events when they are publicised. They have a dual purpose of raising lots of money for the project as well as being great fun. (Anyone who would like to raise funds for the PRISM project is encouraged to do so. See accompanying piece on how to contribute to the PRISM project.) We will be applying for funds from charitable Trusts. We have already applied for a grant for the repair of the roof which, if successful, will send the PRISM appeal off to a flying start. As Carolyn says, appropriately for the building with the Needle of Kent, "A stitch in time saves nine. We should invest in the building for the future generations by caring for it, repairing and maintaining it really well."

Kim Causer

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRISM PROJECT

A short video showing the work of St Michael and All Angels and the aims of the PRISM project may be found on se3.org.uk/prism or se3.org.uk/appeal.

You may donate money to the project in several ways:

- by credit or debit card through the website www.se3.org.uk/donate or search for "St Michaels Blackheath restoration" on Google.
- by cheque to the St Michael & All Angels Parish Office, 1 Pond Road, Blackheath, London, SE3 9JL. Please indicate on your envelope or your cheque that it is for the PRISM project to distinguish it from other funds.
- by making your on-line purchases through www.easyfundraising.org.uk. This is a free and easy way to make donations to your favourite charity. The store from which you make your purchases will make a donation to your charity equivalent to a small percentage of the cost of your purchase. The name of our cause is "St Michaels Church Blackheath Restoration fund". There is no apostrophe in "Michaels".

If you are a UK taxpayer, please fill in a gift aid form available through a link in the se3.org.uk/donate site. Alternatively please put your name and address and confirmation of being a UK tax payer on any letter so that we can reclaim gift aid for the Project.

We welcome any fund raising activities on behalf of the PRISM Project. You may link your own fund raising appeal to the se3.org.uk/donate website so that contributions to your efforts can be paid directly into the project funds.

For further information on the PRISM project, you may contact Sandy Christie, the vicar of St Michael and All Angels, ar.christie@virgin.net, Stephen Hingston, the project leader, sthingston@hotmail.com, or Chris Ashworth, the head of the fund raising team, cjashworth307@icloud.com.

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50 YEARS OF SERVICE

Sheila Baughan was born in Sydenham and her family moved into Blackheath shortly afterwards. It was in St. Michael's where she first heard the real gospel preached and began her search from enthusiastic church membership to converted Christian life.

Her adventure began in 1960 when a group of 6 young people from the Youth Fellowship in St. Michael's went to Klostermuhle in Germany (Capenwray Fellowship) for a youth camp, and Sheila returned radically changed. In her own words "That was when I met with Jesus and he changed me into a believer and a disciple willing to let Him be the Boss from there on. I was 20 years old and worked in a travel agency and loved languages and travel. By then I was bilingual in German and spoke a bit of French.

A year later I went to another youth camp in Keswick led by BCMS (an Anglican missionary society). In an atmosphere of future missionaries and testimonies of other young people, for the first time I was faced with some important questions such as: Have you ever thought of leaving home? Do you think God might want you as a missionary? Nothing was farther from my mind, but by the time the Lord had spoken to me in the Conference I was able to say "Well if you want Lord, I would be willing". Our Vicar then was Frank Wankling, an ex-missionary in Burma.

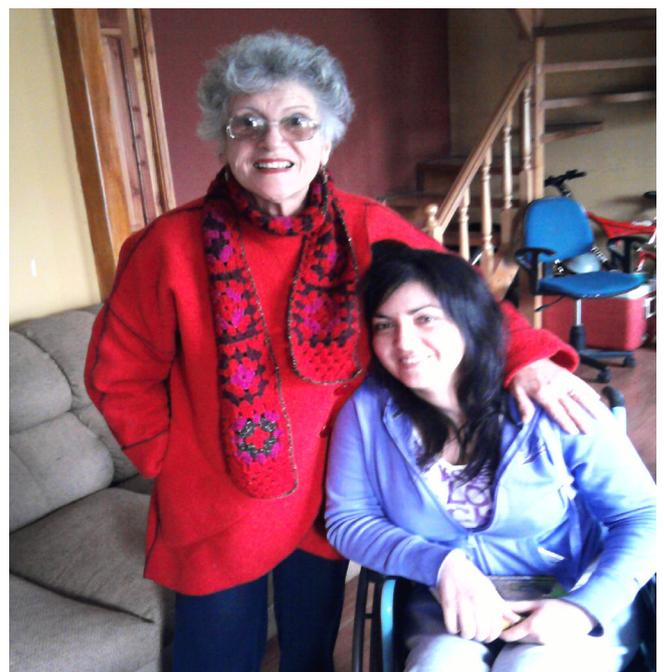
It was unlikely that any missionary society would accept me with a rather poor health history having had tuberculosis as a small child. Besides which I was "only a secretary". Some of my close friends in St. Michael's began to get very enthusiastic about what God was doing in South America. I was also excited and began to pray and learn more about Chile, Argentina and Paraguay and started to learn Spanish on records.

Then I heard that a couple from St. John's Blackheath were going as missionaries to Chile and I went to their farewell service – that night I heard a voice saying "Why don't you apply"? To my surprise I got a big welcome as they were praying for 3 secretaries, one for each republic and they needed them NOW. I felt completely inadequate and asked for 2 years preparation at Bible School. The urgency was great and I took a step of faith and went in January 1962 instead of waiting another year and saving more money.

In 1964, I was finishing the last term and our passage was booked on the passenger ship *Viña del Mar* with other young missionaries to Chile. At the last minute this was changed and I was offered a passage alone on a cargo-passenger "*Salamanca*" leaving July 10th. In a daze I got a strange assortment of bags, cases and trunks together, including Mr. Wankling's paraffin stove and portable table ex Burma. There was barely time to say goodbye to friends and family – my father accompanied me and left me on board, a 24 year old "new" Christian; no other Christians on board amongst the 12 passengers. The little ship took 6 weeks to arrive in Chile, leaving cargo on route – lots of interesting ports of call, including the Panama Canal.

From a London secretarial job to a busy little Admin office of the Mission in Temuco a provincial capital town with around 150,000 inhabitants. I had 3 months to learn the job and continue with Spanish classes on my own, then 6 months holding the fort for an older missionary who needed a break. Everything in Spanish, and accounting in 3 currencies".

We shall hear more from Sheila about her work in Chile in another edition of the Messenger soon.



Sheila with a friend

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St Michael
& ALL ANGELS

CHURCH SERVICES

St Michael's is a Church of England Church, and our main morning service is at 10.30 am. The first Sunday of the month is a shorter all age service, and on the other Sundays children leave for Sunday school after about 15 minutes. There is a crèche for under 3's. On the second and fourth Sunday of the month the service includes communion.

The evening service at 6.30 p.m. is quieter and more reflective with communion on the first and third Sundays of the month.

Book of Common Prayer Communion service is at 9 a.m. on the fourth Sunday of each month.

Raise the Praise on the third Sunday of the month at 5 pm, a half hour service designed for children under 10 and their families, which is followed by tea in the hall.

Special services

Wednesday 18th February at 8.00 p.m.

Communion Service to mark Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Thanksgiving

4th January: Imogen Giunipero

Weddings

10th January: Richard King and Hilary Croft

Funerals

8th December: Joan Kovats

19th January: Lily Worley

27th January: Doreen Jewkes

LENT ART INSTALLATION: WITHIN THE LIGHT

Many of you will recall the fascinating sculptures on display in Southwark cathedral during Lent in 2014; again this year they have installed an art display to highlight Lent which will be well worth visiting so, if you are nearby please take five minutes to pop in and see the installation for yourself.

Within the Light is a large-scale installation made of glass fabric. Several widths of the fabric will hang one above the other forming a canopy from the base of the East end window to the choir stalls. The incidental light of the windows will be reflected by the material. The different light ambiances of the day determine the atmosphere of the space. It is the great lightness and translucence of the material that will create the unique spatial poetry. This monumental art installation will guide the visitor on their Lenten journey. The exhibition is open from Tuesday 17th February until Good Friday 3rd April.



A LENTEN PRAYER

*Almighty God,
Our loving heavenly Father,
Help us, this Lent, to hear your call.
By your grace, help us
To answer your call
To feel your touch on our lives
And to follow Your Son, Jesus,
In what we do, and who we are.
Anoint us with your Spirit
To receive your forgiveness,
Healing and blessing,
And to share these with all
Whom we know and love,
For the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

*Written by Kim Hitch
Rector of St James' Church Kidbrooke*

PRAYER AT ST MICHAEL'S

Why do we pray together? Because Jesus told us to. What do we expect when we pray together? Jesus says "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you". Because prayer works.

The next prayer meeting will be on Thursday 5th February at 8.15 – 9.30 p.m. in the Vestry and on Thursday 5th March at the same time and place.

There will also be a Prism prayer breakfast on Sunday 8th February 8:30-9:30am in the Church Hall. Everyone is most welcome.

St Michael's: making time for the things that matter

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FEBRUARY / MARCH 2015