

Celebrating 100 years with...

The tawny autumn leaves covered the ground as the Cardinal arrived at St Michael's Parish, Ashford for a solemn ceremony of dedication.

But I also recall the carpet of white frost in January when the builders started their work on our Church. Since then, we've had Candlemas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, summer days, First Communions and Confirmations, our Lourdes Pilgrimage and a visit by Bishop Alan Hopes. There have been endless meetings, scaffolding, fundraising, a makeshift altar, painters, stonemasons, electricians and all manner of people with clipboards. But at last it is all complete.

The church was packed for the mid-morning Mass, with parishioners, priests past and present, visitors, our architect and the Diocesan Surveyor who advised us throughout the works – and of course, the Cardinal. On this bright autumn morning there was a sense of reunion, with people we hadn't seen for ages saying hello and catching up with one another.

It's not every day that this liturgy happens so of course we had all studied the rite to make sure it all went correctly and smoothly – and it did. This was a beautiful yet simple ritual, full of symbol and prayer – sprinkling of the people and the anointing of the altar, the blessing of the walls, complete with their new consecration crosses and candle sconces - which will forever mark this day of new beginnings - a feast of lighted candles, the incensing of our people – and the traditional depositing beneath the altar stone of the relics of St Felix and St Virginia, martyrs, and St Gabriel Possenti, patron saint of students.

Michael Nolan

...architectural problems solved.





Past and present

**Mgr James Overton,
present Parish Priest,
stands to the right
of the Cardinal.**

Photograph ©Marcin Mazur

Hundreds of the parishioners of St Michael's Catholic Church in Ashford, Middlesex welcomed the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, on Sunday, 19 November 2006 on his visit to Ashford to dedicate the church and the new altar. This year St Michael's celebrates one hundred years as a Parish in the Diocese of Westminster. Throughout the year, new building works at the church, including the redesign of the sanctuary and a new altar, were completed in time for the Cardinal's visit.

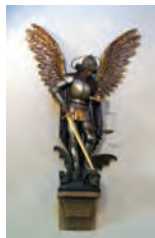


'The icing on the cake'

Photograph ©Michael Nolan

From left to right:

St Michael repositioned, the new 1920s Crucifix, Fr Ron Aylward who was Parish Priest from 1975 - 2000, the new entrance (narthex), the Cardinal with a young parishioner



St Michael's Primary School

St. Michael's Catholic Primary School opened with 132 pupils on 7th January 1953. By the end of that academic year, in July 1953, the number of pupils had risen to 201, ranging from five years to eleven years old.



Right: **St Michael's Catholic Primary School as it is today**

Below: **Blessing and opening souvenir programme from 1953**



The school was blessed and officially opened by Cardinal Bernard Griffin on Saturday, 27th June 1953. The ceremony was attended by the school community and the parish. At the time the Chairman of Governors was the Father Patrick O'Callaghan, Parish Priest, the Divisional Education Officer was Mr Francis Cassidy, a Catholic, and Mr Alexander Dyson was the first Headmaster of St. Michael's School, a great-grandfather to one of our current pupils. The architects for the building of the school were Messrs Sterrett and Blouet and the builders were Charles Doyle and Co Ltd.



Miss Ursula Beirne
Present Headteacher

In the 1970's, when middle schools were introduced, St. Michael's became a 5-7 year olds first school and an 8-12 year olds middle school.

To accommodate these educational needs extra building was added for the first school and to support the curriculum of the middle school a science/ cookery room and an arts and crafts room were created.

The idea of middle school education was disbanded in the early 1990's and St. Michael's reverted to a through primary school for 5-to-11 year olds, creating Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 with the option of taking in children as 'Rising Fives'. The school continues to develop and expand and in 2006 our current number on roll is in excess of 380 children. Projects for expansions to the building to bring us into the 21st century are being planned.

Following the retirement of Mr Alexander Dyson, Mrs Marian Blackburn was appointed Headteacher, followed by Miss Jo Foster. Miss Ursula Beirne is currently the Headteacher.

At the school's Silver Jubilee in 1978, Cardinal Basil Hume commented on the school by saying "I love coming to your school. One can quickly sense atmosphere; my senses tell me that this is a very good Catholic School." This sentiment still holds true today and has been reiterated over the years by many parents, children, the local authority and OfSTED alike.

We pray that God will support us in continuing to provide our children with a Christ-centred environment, which will enable them to become good and successful human beings.

St Michael's - Clergy

Chaplains to the Good Shepherd Sisters

Fr Robert Browne	1899 - 1904
Fr Edward Daniell	1904 - 1906

Parish Priests of St Michael's

Fr Martin Cave	1906 - 1917
Fr Arthur Morgan	1917 - 1924
Fr Edwin Owen	1924 - 1944
Fr Patrick O'Callaghan	1944 - 1970
Fr Anthony Cooke	1970 - 1975
Fr Ronald Aylward	1975 - 2000
Fr James Brand	2000 - 2001
Fr Timothy Dean	2001 - 2002
Mgr James Overton	2002 -

Assistant Priests of St Michael's

Fr Lionel Keane	1943 -1944
Fr Thomas Kilcoyne	1943 -1946
Fr Jeremiah Daly	1946 -1948
Fr Albert Vaughan	1948 -1955
Fr Thomas Stack	1955 -1969
Fr Harold Hamill	1969 -1971
Fr Bernard Lavin	1971 -1974
Fr Guy Sawyer	1974 -1979
Fr Daniel McComiskey, WF	1979 -1980
Fr Richard Extross, SJ	1982 -1987
Fr Michael Stevens	1988 -1993
Fr Andrew Morley	1993
Fr Damian McManus	1994 -1996
Fr Anthony Busuttil	1994 -1996
Fr Andrew O'Connell	1997 -2000

Sir Giles Gilbert Scott 1880-1960



Giles Gilbert Scott was born in Hampstead on 9th November 1880, the second son of George Gilbert Scott and a grandson of Sir George Gilbert Scott. He was educated at Beaumont College, Windsor.

In 1927 he was asked to design St Michael's church, encompassing five main facets:

1. A container that could satisfy the needs and relationships between size, space and social interaction.
2. An environmental filter between the users of the building and their external environment, with ability to work effectively in terms of thermal, lighting and acoustic controls.
3. A cultural symbol. People read meaning into a building, so in order not to be utilitarian it must be consistent in design and thermal pleasure.
4. A capital investment. Valuable resources should be utilised in construction and during maintenance.
5. Environmental impact. The building would change the surrounding micro climate and, therefore, responses to traffic, pollution, etc., needed to be ascertained.

Sir Giles Gilbert Scott died in University College Hospital, London on 9th February 1960 and is buried outside the west of his great Anglican at Liverpool (1903-1942).



Giles Gilbert Scott's drawings of St Michael's exhibited at the Royal Academy

Parish of St Michael's
Centenary
1906 - 2006



Acknowledgments

Parish of St Michael's Centenary 1906 - 2006

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