

St Andrew's Church, Cobham

The Chapel of Peace



Since the eighteenth century there has been a little chapel in the corner of our churchyard at Cobham. It was originally built as a Mortuary Chapel to serve as a place of rest for those whose life on earth was finally over. The coffin would be placed inside, probably the day before the funeral took place in the Parish Church. No doubt those closest to the deceased would often come and spend some time there with

ed one to feel close, to express their grief, to say the words they had somehow
æen able to say when they were alive together, and to pray.

Around the turn of the twentieth century the chapel fell into disuse. It became a depository for discarded articles. Little by little its fabric decayed for want of attention. Ivy grew over and completely engulfed it, hiding it from view and causing even greater damage. It was all but lost.

Some of us had a vision for that chapel. Could it be saved and restored; transformed into a haven of peace for the living as once it had been for the dead?

Thanks to one man who caught that same vision, what once seemed only a dream has now been turned into a reality. With his own resources, his many skills, and using his own hands that man has created a small oasis of peace for all who go there seeking refreshment or solace.

The roof, which was full of holes, was taken off and rebuilt. Sinking walls were underpinned, cracks were filled, stone and flint repaired, the door restored. Inside bare brick was rendered and fine tiles replaced what had once been an earthen floor. Darkness has given way to light and a beautiful iconographic picture, full of vibrant colour, speaks of restoration and new life.

As Christians we firmly believe that God is the Father of all people and loves each of his children equally. He has no favourites. Part of our own vision,

therefore, is that the Chapel of Peace exists for everyone, quite irrespective of faith. Above all else it is especially for those who, because of circumstance perhaps, need somewhere to relax, to be still and to feel themselves surrounded by love.

The special features incorporated into the chapel owe much to a pilgrimage to the Holy Land made by thirty members of our church in October 1998.



The Cross that is set in the path at the chapel entrance is constructed from stones that each of the pilgrims gathered from the shore at Galilee. We have incorporated the Cross in this unusual way to symbolise that the experience of restoration and new life only comes about by facing up to rather than evading the reality of suffering.

The picture depicts a scene from the Gospel where the risen Lord appears to the fishermen disciples at Galilee and takes Peter aside to assure him that, although he feels unworthy, he is accepted, valued, greatly loved and called to a unique task. The figure of Peter represents human brokenness and the promise of hope held out to us all by the healing power of God's love.



At the foot of the window above the picture you will discover some words subtly carved in stone. They were discovered by the pilgrims when visiting the site at Galilee which commemorates the Feeding of the Five Thousand, the Gospel account of Jesus feeding a large crowd with the meagre resources of a young lad. They serve to remind us all that, no matter how insignificant and inadequate we may feel, our lives have been given to us by God for a creative purpose. Each of us can make a real difference.

Unfortunately we have found that we need to keep this chapel locked, but the key is always available from the Parish office in Church Gate House