

# BROMLEY PARISH CHURCH

## A History and Guide



HELEN GRIBBLE

## Foreword

"Resurrection" was the word the people of Bromley Parish Church used to describe the building of their new Church on the rubble of its bombed out predecessor, a victim, like so many, of the second world war.

"Resurrection" proclaims the Sanctuary window which displays the damaged tower against a background of fire; the new Church itself and, between them, an image of the risen Christ for whose worship the building exists.

"Resurrection" is the dedication of the Chapel created within the tower where the prayers of the church are offered day by day for the community which surrounds it and the mission of God who has blessed it.

As Bromley Parish Church celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the completion of the present church building we publish this new guide, both to the building as it now stands and also to the history of the church in this place. We have much to be thankful for to those who went before us; both those who have maintained the life and mission of the church across the centuries, and also those whose determination and prayer ensured its rebuilding after the war. In our own time Bromley Parish Church stands for the Gospel of resurrection as it always did and it presents a living witness to the new life Christ offers us as it always has.

I am particularly grateful to Helen Gribble for writing this guide and for working to ensure its publication and together we hope that readers will find it both interesting and inspiring.

Michael Camp  
Vicar  
December 2007

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## Acknowledgements

In compiling this book my aim has been to provide the visitor to the church with a concise, factual and pictorial description of the building and its treasures along with the historical background: each item is dealt with in its entirety, there is very little cross referencing.

Many people have helped with their advice and suggestions for which I am most grateful, but I would particularly thank the Revd. Michael Camp for encouraging me to pursue my suggestion of a pictorial guide book, also for writing the Foreword and allowing me to use material from his booklet on the stained glass windows. My thanks also go to Ron Finch who kindly made available to me text from his recently updated history of Bromley Parish Church; to Nic Hodson who spent time producing many of the photographs, and to Gerald Elves for the architect's plans of the previous and the present church.

Finally, my thanks to Michael Walker of L & T Press Ltd. whose expertise has resulted in a book which I hope will be an attractive and easy to use guide for all who visit Bromley Parish Church.

*Helen Gribble*

## EARLY DAYS OF BROMLEY PARISH CHURCH

Bromley Parish Church has played a significant role in the history of Bromley from its early days as a manor to the present London Borough, a period of at least 800 years.

### GRANTING OF LAND TO THE BISHOPS OF ROCHESTER

When the first church was built on the present site is uncertain, but from the records it is known that the history of Bromley started with Ethelbert, King of Wessex and Kent granting ten ploughlands to Dryhtwald, one of his ministers in a charter of 862AD. Then in 966 or 967 King Eadgar granted lands at Bromley to Aelfstan, Bishop of Rochester, but shortly after the lands were taken back. In 998 King Ethelred II – the Unready – was reconciled with the monks of St Andrew of Rochester and most of the land was restored to the Bishop.

After the Norman Conquest, Odo – half brother of William the Conqueror – Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent seized some of the Bishop's land including the manor of Bromley. Lanfranc (Archbishop of Canterbury) who had appointed Gundulph in 1077 as Bishop of Rochester complained to the King; this resulted in the restoration of land to the Bishop, including the manor of Bromley. A reference in the Domesday Book to the Bishop's 'demesne' in Bromley indicates a residence but not a separate parish church. It is likely that Bishop Gundulph built an Episcopal manor

house or palace soon after 1080, he was a master builder having the Keep of the Tower of London and Rochester Castle to his credit. A spring containing medicinal properties was found in the grounds of the Bishop's Palace and dedicated as a Holy Well, incorporated into a Chapel of St Blaise. This chapel may well have served as the parish church.

### FIRST RECORD OF A SEPARATE PARISH CHURCH IN BROMLEY

The first written record indicating the possibility of a separate church

*Below:  
Print of Bromley Parish  
Church in the 18th century*



appeared in the Registrum Roffense – the Register of the Bishops of Rochester in about 1126; this included a record of 9d paid as 'Chrism Rent' to the Bishop for consecrated oil used in baptism. The register also records several grants being made between 1148 and 1182 to Hugone de Bromleghe (Presbiter de Bromleghe).

### FIRST RECORD OF A RECTOR

The first recorded rector was Richard de Wendover 1226-1238, who afterwards became Bishop of Rochester and was later buried in Westminster Abbey. These records indicate a separate parish church early in the 13th century and possibly much of the 12th century. The Bishop's Register in 1310 mentions together the existence of St Blaise's Chapel in the Bishop's Palace and a separate church dedicated to St Peter and St Paul.

### 1327 REBUILDING IN THE GOTHIC STYLE

In 1327 it appears that the church was almost in ruins, it was rebuilt in the Gothic style and consisted of a chancel, nave, south aisle, entrance porch on the south side plus a confessional within the building; this rebuilding was made possible with money raised by the Bishop which included a levy on the residents of the manor. No further major alterations took place until the 18th century.

### 1537 APPOINTMENT OF PERPETUAL VICARS

The living of Bromley continued as a rectory until 1537 when by order of Henry VIII it was transferred to the Bishops of Rochester who were commanded to 'appoint, ordain and sufficiently endow perpetual Vicars'. The earliest Church Registers date from just after this time, the Register of Baptisms starts in 1558, Marriages in 1575 and Burials 1578. After the Reformation the majority of the vestments, altar cloths and church plate had been removed, but by the end of the 17th and early 18th century these had been replaced by various gifts to the church. In 1646 a Bill of Parliament required the Church to sell many of its estates, this included the manor of Bromley. However, Bishop Warner managed to retain the Bishop's Palace (except for a short period in his latter years when it was sold and later returned to the Bishop). Bishop Warner died in 1666 and his legacy paid for the foundation of Bishop Warner's Foundation now Bromley and Sheppard's Colleges, to provide almshouses for the widows of clergymen. The colleges now house retired clergy themselves as well as their spouses and clergy widows; some collegians are active members of the Parish Church.

### 1739 EXTRA SEATING REQUIRED

In the 18th century disfigurement of the church began due to the building of galleries, as there was a need to increase the seating capacity. In 1778 a second gallery above the one already constructed at the west end of the church was provided for the Charity children who attended from the Charity School in the town. With the need to have more seating the fire engine was removed. It was customary at that time for this to be housed in the church, also that meetings on secular topics would be held either in the vestry or in church immediately after the Sunday service. This practice related to the dual responsibility of the Parish Vestry in that it not only administered the

church but was also responsible for the general business matters of the town. The Bromley Vestry Minute books date back to 1703, but the first recorded Vestry Clerk was appointed in 1673.

In 1777 a new clock was purchased, this time one that chimed. In 1797 the large east window was bricked up and replaced by a small circular one; this remained until about 1829 when a two-light and later three-light window was put in place. With the church dedicated to St Peter and St Paul the left and right hand lights were occupied by them, with the Ascension depicted in the centre. An organ was built in 1825 and later reconstructed in 1856. In 1791 the Vestry was broken into and the church robbed of a chalice, flagon



*Left: Bromley Parish  
Church in the mid  
nineteenth century*

and paten, the theft was thought to be the work of more than one person because a whole bottle of wine was taken from the cupboard and drunk.

### 1824-1830 REBUILDING OF THE CHURCH

The state of the interior of the church was such that it became necessary for either extensive renovations or rebuilding to take place and so between 1824 and 1830 the latter option was chosen and the church

was rebuilt, only the Norman font and tower were left; the rebuilding was in the new Victorian Gothic style.

### 1875 THE BISHOPS OF ROCHESTER LEAVE BROMLEY

In 1875 the Bishops of Rochester sold Bromley Palace and thus ended 600 years of their close relationship with Bromley. The Church Commissioners recommended the Diocese of Rochester purchase land in Essex as a residence for the Bishop and sell off the manor house in Bromley. Bromley then became part of the Diocese of Canterbury until 1905 when it once again became incorporated into the Diocese of Rochester, the latter having reverted to its former area following the creation of the Diocese of Southwark.

### WORLD WAR II AND THE CHURCH IN RUINS

The parish church remained unaltered and also unscathed through World War I, but was destroyed by enemy action in World War II as a result of a landmine on the night of Wednesday, 16th April 1941, leaving only the damaged tower standing.

*Below: A picture showing the full extent of the desolation of Bromley Parish Church caused by a 550 pound bomb in the Bromley 'Blitz'*



## POST WORLD WAR II – THE REBUILDING

After World War II permission was granted for the church to be rebuilt; this led to much discussion regarding the style and included visits by the vicar and his team to view recently built churches. The new church at Kenton near Harrow, Middlesex was chosen as the one on which the new Bromley church would be modelled. The architect was J. Harold Gibbons and he was invited to submit designs, these were approved by the Church Council in 1948. The builders were Dove Bros. of Islington who at the time were building Guildford Cathedral. The new church would be 160 feet 6 inches in length, 66 feet across at the widest part and seat 830 people. Stones from Rochester and Canterbury cathedrals were incorporated in the wall of the Children's Chapel alongside the foundation stone; the latter was laid by HRH Princess Elizabeth on 13th October 1949. On 20th December 1952 the nave of the church was consecrated by the Bishop of Rochester, the Right Reverend Christopher Chavasse, he returned on 14th December 1957 to consecrate the chancel and sanctuary.

As you look round the church you cannot fail to notice how many things were generously donated by other churches and organisations, and together with the hard work and generosity of the parishioners in raising funds, a new Bromley Parish Church was able to be built and rise from the ruins.



*Below: Foundation Stone*





*Above: Figure of Christ the King (over north door)*

## A TOUR OF THE CHURCH

### THE AMBULATORY

The best place to start your tour is by entering through the main north door over which is a figure of Christ the King. At this point one is at the eastern end of the ambulatory and under an arch to your right is the **Consecration Stone**. The then Bishop of Rochester – the Right Reverend Christopher Chavasse – consecrated the new nave in 1952 and returned on 14th December 1957 to consecrate the chancel and sanctuary, this marked the virtual completion of the rebuilding and re-dedication.

The ambulatory contains a number of memorial stones and brasses, most of which were salvaged from the ruins after the bombing. The large dark gravestone is in memory of **Zachary Pearce**, a former Bishop

of Rochester for 18 years. He died in 1774 leaving £5,000 to Bromley College to pay the stipend of the College Chaplain and some extra for the clergy widows living there. A small dark gravestone next to Bishop Zachary Pearce's is that of **Elizabeth (Tetty) Johnson**, the wife of Dr Samuel Johnson, the writer and lexicographer. The date of her death should be 1752 not 1753. The three Thornhill brasses commemorate **Richard Thornhill**, a benefactor of the church who died in 1600; he left 'two clokes' for the clerk and sexton. Three other memorial brasses are those of the **Tweedy Family** who over the years played a prominent part in the history of Bromley.

Buried in a niche in the ambulatory are the ashes of four persons closely connected with the



*Right: Consecration Stone*

rebuilding of the present church: J. Harold Gibbons the architect, who died on 30th December 1957 just 16 days after the completion and consecration of the church, Canon Murray Walton who was vicar during the rebuilding period, and his wife; also the ashes of Edward Horton the vergier during this time.

At the end of the ambulatory on the north side is the Children's



*Left: Plaque to J. Harold Gibbons, Church Architect*

Chapel (see page 18), but first enter the main church by the north-west door on your left.



*Left: Memorial stones and plaques in the ambulatory*



*Above: Statues and shields on the front of the gallery at the west end of the church*

## WEST END OF THE CHURCH

Stand and look towards the west wall. In the centre is a doorway leading into a short corridor (the Link) and on into the Church Rooms (see page 20). On either side of the doorway are statues of the patron saints – on the left St Peter, and on the right St Paul. The arms of the Bishop of Rochester are on the front of the gallery along with shields representing other people and organisations associated with the church e.g. the Archbishop of Canterbury and the arms of the old Borough of Bromley (1903-1965). Hanging on the west wall is a list of rectors and vicars from 1226 to the present day; the first recorded rector is Richard de Wendover (1226) although a church had been on this site since the early middle ages.

He is the only incumbent of Bromley to have been consecrated Bishop of Rochester (1238) although several vicars in latter years were consecrated bishop of other diocese. The two book tables were a gift from

St Paul's Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

## THE BAPTISTRY

Move across to the southwest corner and view the Baptistry. The basin of the font is of Bethersden marble and consistent with its Norman origin has four plain rounded arches carved on each side; it was one of the three items of the church to survive the bombing in 1941. The window behind the font on the south wall, along with the Te Deum window over the main north door was the work of M.E. Aldrich-Rope of Parsons Green, London. A sketch of the original design (slightly altered when the window was made) was found in 2002 and now hangs in the Shortlands Room (see page 20).

The window depicts the Christian's progress from Baptism to Heaven, shown by a long winding pilgrimage of children from this font at the bottom to the City of God at the top. Immediately beneath





the City is a sun, moon and stars illustrating the belief that heaven is above the sky. An angel shows the children the way up. The pilgrimage passes four medallions, these encompass aspects of the Christian life - Confirmation, Baptism of the Ethiopian as a reminder of the beginning of the spread of Christianity to all races, Our Lord surrounded by children, and lastly Jesus' own Baptism in the River Jordan.

A text from Zechariah 'The streets of the City shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof' is seen at the bottom of the window.

*Above: List of Rectors, Perpetual Curates and Vicars*

*Left: The Baptistry*

*Opposite page: Artist's original drawing of window in the Baptistry*



*Above: View from nave  
towards High Altar*

## THE NAVE

Now walk through the centre aisle of the Nave and when halfway, turn and look back – suddenly a very plain concrete building becomes alive with colour from the large number of kneelers. **The Nave Kneeler Project** began in 1994 when it was intended to make 400 kneelers supplied by Jacksons of Hebden Bridge and embroidered by members of the congregation, these to be in wool

in cross stitch on canvas and then professionally finished. The wools to be used would be bright and add much needed colour to the nave. Many are dedicated to loved ones or mark special celebrations of birth, marriage or parish occasions. This project followed on from a similar one started in the mid 1970s to replace those in the Lady Chapel and south aisle. To mark the new millennium an **Altar Rail Kneeler Project** was launched, the kneelers

to be one of four designs selected to reflect features within the church.

Continue to the front pews and here you will notice the close links that Bromley Parish Church has with the local borough (now the London Borough of Bromley). The right hand pew bears the old coat of arms of Bromley Borough and is the Mayor's seat at civic services; the pew was a gift from the Mayor and Town Council. The pew on the left bears the arms of the House of Commons, being the seat of a former Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for Bromley, the Rt. Hon. Harold Macmillan.

### THE TE DEUM WINDOW

As you stand at the front of the nave facing the altar, look up to the window on your left over the main north door, this is the finest of all the stained glass windows – the Te Deum window. Along with some of the other windows it was made by M.E. Aldridge-Rope but was not put into position until 1959, two years after the dedication of the new church. A great early Christian hymn, the Te Deum has continued in use for occasions of thanksgiving, and is one of the canticles in the Book of Common Prayer used in the service of Morning Prayer.

At the top of the window is a rose in the centre of which is Christ as ruler of all. He is enthroned, crowned and holding sceptres signifying his office; his feet rest on an emerald green rainbow. He is encircled by words from the Te Deum – 'Thou art the King of Glory O Christ, Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father'. Seven angels surround the central figure, at the top the Archangel Gabriel is holding lilies and appearing to Mary, two at the bottom are offering worship whilst the other four carry symbols of the Passion – a stick with a sponge, spear, crown of thorns and a cross. The whole is overshadowed by a dove representing the Holy Spirit.

The two lights which form the body of the window contain other phrases from the Te Deum, and at



*Above right and right:  
Te Deum window*



the top of each a symbol, on the left the sun and on the right the moon. Mary and the Apostles are seen looking towards heaven and the caption 'The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee'. Other symbols include martyrs, children, a bishop and a knight, a group of prophets led by John the Baptist, and a variety of people representing the many nationalities and cultures of the worldwide church. At the bottom of the window a final quotation 'O Lord let thy mercy lighten upon us as our trust is in thee'.

## THE PULPIT

Back at ground level and to your left by the chancel step is the pulpit. The wood carving depicts the four evangelists and was designed by J. Harold Gibbons. Carved into a panel to the rear of the pulpit steps is the inscription 'The Gift of the Bishop's Men of the Diocese of Rochester USA 1953'. Nearby is the American bald eagle surrounded by a wreath of oak leaves, and just below are two mice the well known trademark of its maker, Robert Thompson of Kilburn, North Yorkshire. On the side nearest the choir is a gibbon scratching his head, carved to act as a reminder of its architect.

In 2007 a new green **pulpit fall** was given in memory of a former parishioner, this was designed and worked by Susan Riley and complements the Miracle of Fishes altar frontal (see page 17). It depicts the story of Peter finding a coin in a fish's mouth and includes an actual denarius coin dating from 27BC.

As you stand at the chancel step to your right is the **lectern** carved by James Wedgwood, this was a gift from the Free Churches of Bromley.



*Above Left: Fish with denarius coin embroidered on pulpit fall*

*Left: Side of pulpit with carved inscription*

## THE CHANCEL, ORGAN AND CHOIR

Step up into the chancel and to your right above the choir stalls is the **Walker organ** - a new addition to the church in 1991, being dedicated on 15th December; experts regard it as one of the finest built in England in the 20th century. It is a 3-Manual and Pedal Mechanical Action organ built by J. W. Walker and Sons Ltd. of Brandon, Suffolk. The inaugural concert was given by David Sanger, international concert organist on St Cecilia's Day, 22nd November 1991. The Walker organ has allowed the church to enhance its long standing musical reputation, and regular concerts continue to be given by well known organists.

**Bromley Parish Church choir** have achieved both local and wider acclamation for their fine singing, this has led to invitations to sing in York Minster, Worcester and Truro Cathedrals and on the continent. In the March 2007 edition of Church Music Quarterly an article described the choir as 'deserves to be ranked among the finest parish choirs in Great Britain'.



*Right: The organ*

## THE SANCTUARY

The main features of the sanctuary are the reredos and the two windows. High above the altar is the east window and on the north wall the 'resurrection' window. **The Seven Angels Reredos** was designed and worked by Susan Riley (artist in embroidered textiles and ecclesiastical vestments). Her aim was to introduce

colour into an otherwise gloomy sanctuary so that the eye was led up from the altar to the window above. Commissioned in 2000 it took two years to complete and was inspired by the angels of the seven churches to whom letters are addressed in the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation. Early in her career Susan Riley had been influenced by jewel-like colours against gold leaf on early

*Below: Seven Angels Reredos*



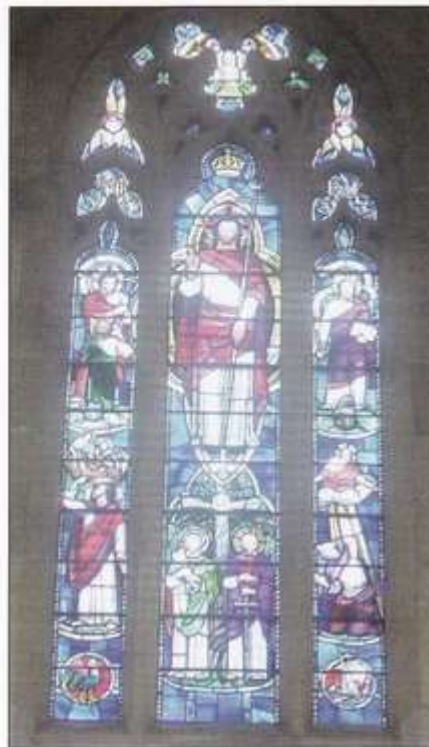
Italian paintings and other works of art found in museums and galleries in this country, along with the mosaics of St Mark's Basilica in Venice and at Ravenna.

The angels are worked in freehand machine embroidery on gold satin lame with applied textile layers of wild silk, Indian silk and silk organzas in many colours, then applied to a rich plum coloured velvet background interlined with heavy cotton. Each angelic column together with its praying or praising hands took a minimum of 130 hours of intensive work. Together with the Cope of Martyrs for St Paul's Cathedral, the reredos was the largest work that Susan Riley had created.

**The east window** above the high altar is dedicated to the Patron Saints, Peter (left) and Paul (right). Each saint has images of a few significant moments in his life and is surmounted by his name and symbol, keys for St Peter and a sword for St Paul.

The central light depicts the risen Christ holding a cross and with his hand raised in blessing; above his head a crown signifies his kingship and beneath his feet the dove of the Holy Spirit. At the top of the window are a selection of images of heaven, including angels and the City of God.

The main scene on St Peter's side of the window is of the apostle kneeling to receive a pastoral staff from the risen Christ, around him are the words 'Feed my lambs, feed my sheep' (John ch.21). This recalls



*Left: Window above High Altar*

the forgiving of St Peter for his denial and his commissioning as chief Bishop of the Church. A second image shows his original call by Jesus as he beckoned him to leave his fishing, and lastly a cockerel to recall his thrice denying that he had known Jesus.

The image of St Paul's life in the right hand light includes a quill and book indicating his letter writing – his greatest legacy to the Church of today. The crucifix lying on a page of the book represents a description of his work in that he proclaimed Christ crucified. 'He is a chosen vessel to bear my name and story to the Gentiles' is a version of the



*Above: 'Resurrection' window,  
north wall of sanctuary*

*Right: Detail of 'Resurrection'  
window*

words spoken by God to Ananias, a Christian living in Damascus who befriended Paul and helped complete his conversion. A small black child sits praying at St Paul's feet, whilst another image shows Paul cowering beneath the light that blinded him (Acts Ch.9) and the ascended Christ telling him he is persecuting Jesus himself; finally the ship is a reminder of St Paul's journeys and shipwreck.

The window in the north wall of the sanctuary and to the left as you stand before the High Altar is the **Resurrection window**, at its base the word 'Resurgam' meaning 'Resurrection'. The design incorporates images of the resurrection of Christ with the destruction and subsequent resurrection of Bromley Parish Church. The coat of arms at the top bears the motto 'Animo et Fide' or 'Life and Faith'. The resurrection of Christ is portrayed by angels worshipping the risen Christ, along with the two women being met at the tomb on the first Easter morning by an angel who told them Christ was risen. The reference to Bromley Parish Church is shown by the badly damaged tower and devastation caused by the bomb on the night of 16th April 1941, above this can be seen the new church which rose from the ashes of that devastation.

The **Miracle of Fishes Altar Frontal** is another example of Susan Riley's exquisite designs and embroidery skills, it followed the



completion of the Seven Angels Reredos (see page 14). Her intention was to complement the design of the new reredos and continue the effect of warm, rich colours brightening the sanctuary.

The altar frontals and pulpit falls in general use were designed, made and embroidered locally by Elizabeth Geddes and members of the Bromley College of Art. Japanese gold thread was used extensively being a gift from the wife of the Japanese Ambassador. Canon Murray Walton who was Vicar during the time of the rebuilding had been a missionary in Japan.

### THE LADY CHAPEL

As you face the altar the Lady Chapel is to the right, the ever burning flame by the south wall hangs above the aumbry where the reserved Blessed Sacrament is kept.

To the left of the sanctuary steps lead down to the Vicar's and Choir vestries and the Parish Office.

You have now completed your tour of the church so return to the north west door by which you entered, cross the ambulatory and enter the chapel opposite.



*Above: The Lady Chapel*

*Right: 'Miracle of Fishes' altar frontal*

## THE CHAPELS, TOWER, CHURCH ROOMS AND CHURCHYARD

### THE CHILDREN'S CHAPEL

At present the main features of this chapel are the stained glass windows, but during 2007 an addition to these will be a mural designed and painted by Alison Hodson; this is one of several ideas on how to revitalise this chapel and make it more 'user friendly'.

The three windows in the north wall – each of two lights – were made in 1954 by Edward Woore of Putney. The western and central windows are memorials to the Beer family – Norah Gregory Beer and her three children, Douglas, Rosemary and Graham. The eastern window is in memory of Hazel Kissick a sixth former of Bromley Grammar School who lost her life whilst fire watching during the air raid which destroyed the church.

Of these three windows the western one depicts an Epiphany scene – in one light (right) the stable contains the infant Jesus with Mary and Joseph, also an ox and an ass; in the other (left) the three wise men with their gifts. The central window shows the Presentation of Christ in the Temple with Simeon and Anna, whilst the right hand light depicts the flight into Egypt. The eastern window show Jesus as an older child – on the left the Holy Family is at home in Nazareth with Jesus assisting Joseph in his carpenters

shop; in the right hand light Jesus is teaching the elders in the Temple in Jerusalem having been missed by his parents on the way home following a family visit there.

The four small windows around the apsidal east end of the chapel were made in 1953 by M. E. Aldridge-Rope. They represent the four Archangels, from the left – Uriel, Gabriel, Michael and Raphael. Uriel (Flame of God) appears in a book entitled 'Enoch' referred to in Genesis chapter 5 and probably written by him about the first century BC. Uriel in Hebrew literature is traditionally known as the one who brings light to Israel, hence the sun and vivid red flames. In the second light the Archangel Gabriel is shown appearing to Mary at the time of the Annunciation, above her head a dove representing the Holy Spirit. The third light shows Michael triumphing over the devil (portrayed as a dragon). This image is taken from St John's vision as described by him in Revelation chapter 12 of the battle with the devil and his defeat which leads to eternal peace with God for a saved humanity, 'Peace of God' as shown in the window. The final window concerns Archangel Raphael ('God has healed'). The story of Tobias and his father Tobit appears in the Apocrypha in which Raphael also features as a healer; the latter having instructed Tobias in the making of

an ointment from the organs of a fish which bit his foot when swimming in the River Tigris. The Church's Ministry of Healing has subsequently been linked to Raphael.

### THE CHAPEL OF THE RESURRECTION

Is situated within the tower and reached by a spiral stone staircase. On one wall hangs the tapestry coat of arms for Bromley Borough from 1903 to 1965, previously it hung above the Mayor's seat in the Council Chamber. The chapel is small and is used for Morning and Evening Prayer each day and some weekday Communion services. As the tower survived the Blitz there remains in the chapel walls marks made by the various masons dating back to 1606.

### THE TOWER

An inventory of the medieval church taken in 1553 referred to 'four great belles seated in the steeple'. A new peal of bells was hung in 1773 and then the church remained relatively unaltered until 1829 when the church was rebuilt in the early 19th century Victorian Gothic style, this was the building demolished by the landmine in 1941 – all except the tower. The scene was described as 'only the tower standing solitary, broken but still erect, against a luminous sky'. The tower caught alight belching forth flame and smoke as the wooden beams blazed so the whole peal of

eight bells crashed to the floor. The sad end to this was finding Hazel Kissick's body the following morning amongst the ruins – she had been fire watching on the tower.

The rebuilding of the church altered the position of the tower, previously it stood at the south east corner of the church, but when rebuilt the church was placed further back from the road and the tower occupied the south west corner (see plan page 25) thus enlarging the churchyard. The new peal of



bells cast by Gillett and Johnston of Croydon Ltd used some of the metal from the previous bells; this firm also made the new clock which is electrically wound.

The restoration of the tower was completed in 1951, the roof is 61

*Above: Chapel of the Resurrection, in the tower*

feet 6 inches from the ground plus a further 12 feet 7 inches to the top of the turret. To reach the eighteen feet square area at the top of the tower you will climb 92 steps. The exterior of the tower has diagonal buttresses and three string courses on its four sides, the top course being decorated with grotesques and gargoyles. In the first stage of the tower is a large west window inserted in 1872 – this is the window in the Chapel of the Resurrection (see page 19). The bell chamber houses the peal of eight bells and the separate clock bell. The weight of each bell ranges from 5cwt. to 16cwt., the total weight being 68cwt. The bell frame is now of steel and the bells are hung on ball bearings to facilitate the ringing.

*Below: Church Rooms at west side of church*



## THE BELL RINGERS

There has been a bell ringing society in Bromley since 1773 when the eight bells were first hung in the tower, this society was – and still is – called The Society of Bromley Youths. The society, all men, flourished and in 1880 joined the Kent County Association of Change Ringers when it was founded; this meant they rang in churches much further afield than Bromley. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that improved engineering techniques made it possible for women to ring, that meant they were able to join the Bromley Youths. In the early days the bell ringers were paid in refreshments from a local public house, but in 1823 an entry in the Vestry Minutes records a petition for them to be paid in cash, yet it still took several years for this to come into operation. At the present time under the leadership of the tower captain twelve people ring regularly for Sunday services and practise weekly on Tuesday evening.

## CHURCH ROOMS AND YOUTH CENTRE

In 1982 an extension was built onto the west end of the church, reached via the Link (see page 8). This comprised of two rooms for social functions – one with a small galley, a large kitchen and a committee room (Shortlands Room). Doors linking the two social rooms can be folded back to make one large room.



Two years later a **Youth Centre** was built in the south east corner of the churchyard. Both of these facilities may be hired and provide much needed income for the church.

In the summer of 2005 an extensive upgrading programme was undertaken partly to comply with Health and Safety Regulations; this included refurbishment of the toilets, provision of a toilet for the disabled and the redesigning of the kitchen and replacement of equipment. Outside works involved replacing some of the stonework on the tower, extension of the car park at the east

end of the church and the building of an access ramp up to the vestry/office door, plus the installation of an entry phone.

## THE CHURCHYARD AND LYCH GATE

The extensive church grounds were reduced on the eastern boundary by the purchase of some land by Bromley Council in 1960; they wished to build an access road to the rear of the shops at the top of the High Street. The Church Council agreed a purchase price of

*Above: Lych gate*



*Above:  
Garden of Remembrance*

£3,000, plus the future maintenance of the churchyard. The road was named Tetty Way in memory of Dr Johnson's wife. By the east gate is a small obelisk, a memorial to Coles Child the first Lord of the Manor after the Bishops left Bromley. He was a Deputy Lieutenant and Magistrate of the County of Kent and died in 1873.

The **lych gate** was designed by a Mr St Aubyn and constructed in 1855 at a cost of £70. It is made of heart-oak and fastened with wooden pins.

On the west side of the churchyard by the entrance to the

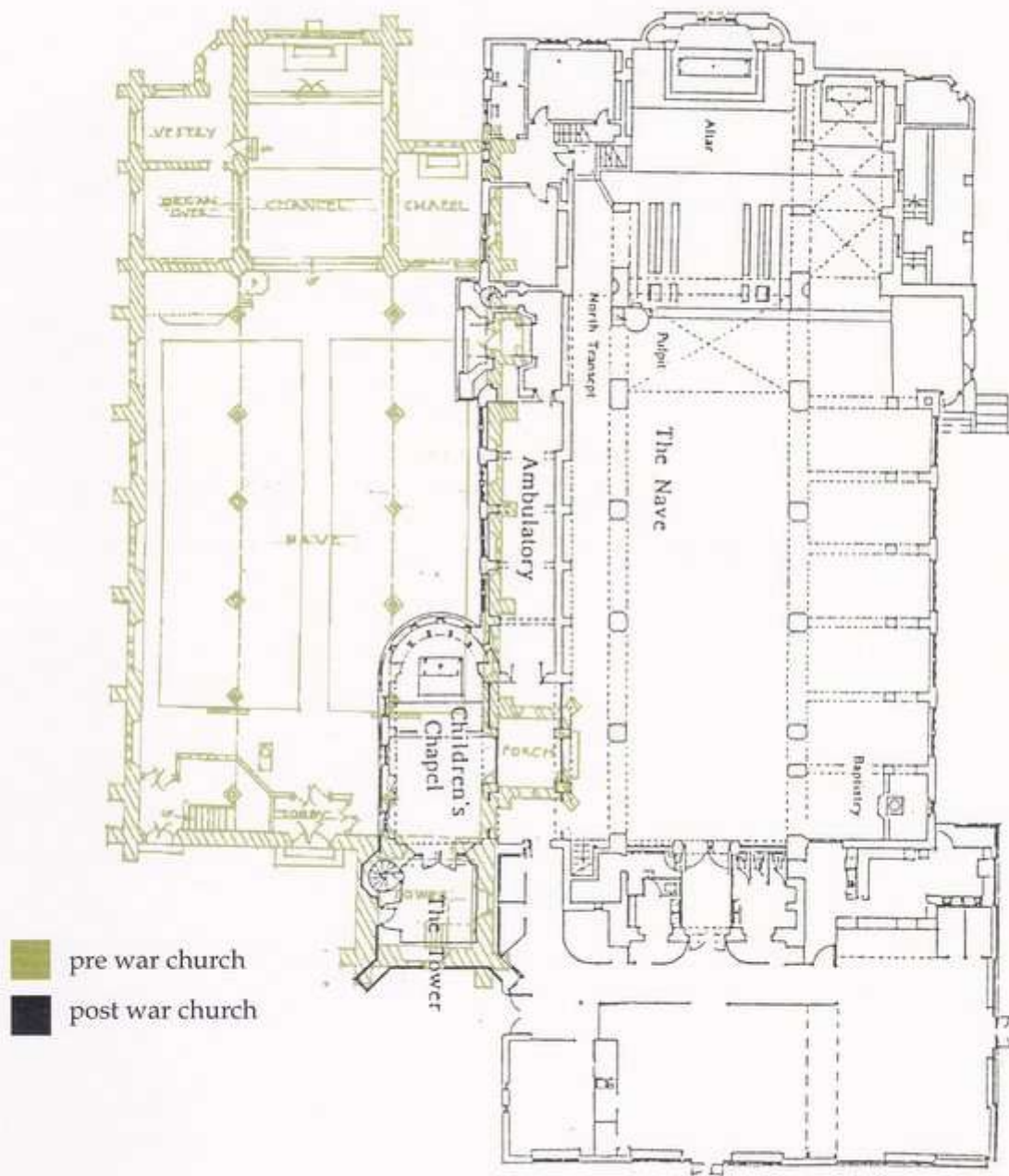
Church Rooms is the **Garden of Remembrance** where the ashes of former parishioners are buried.

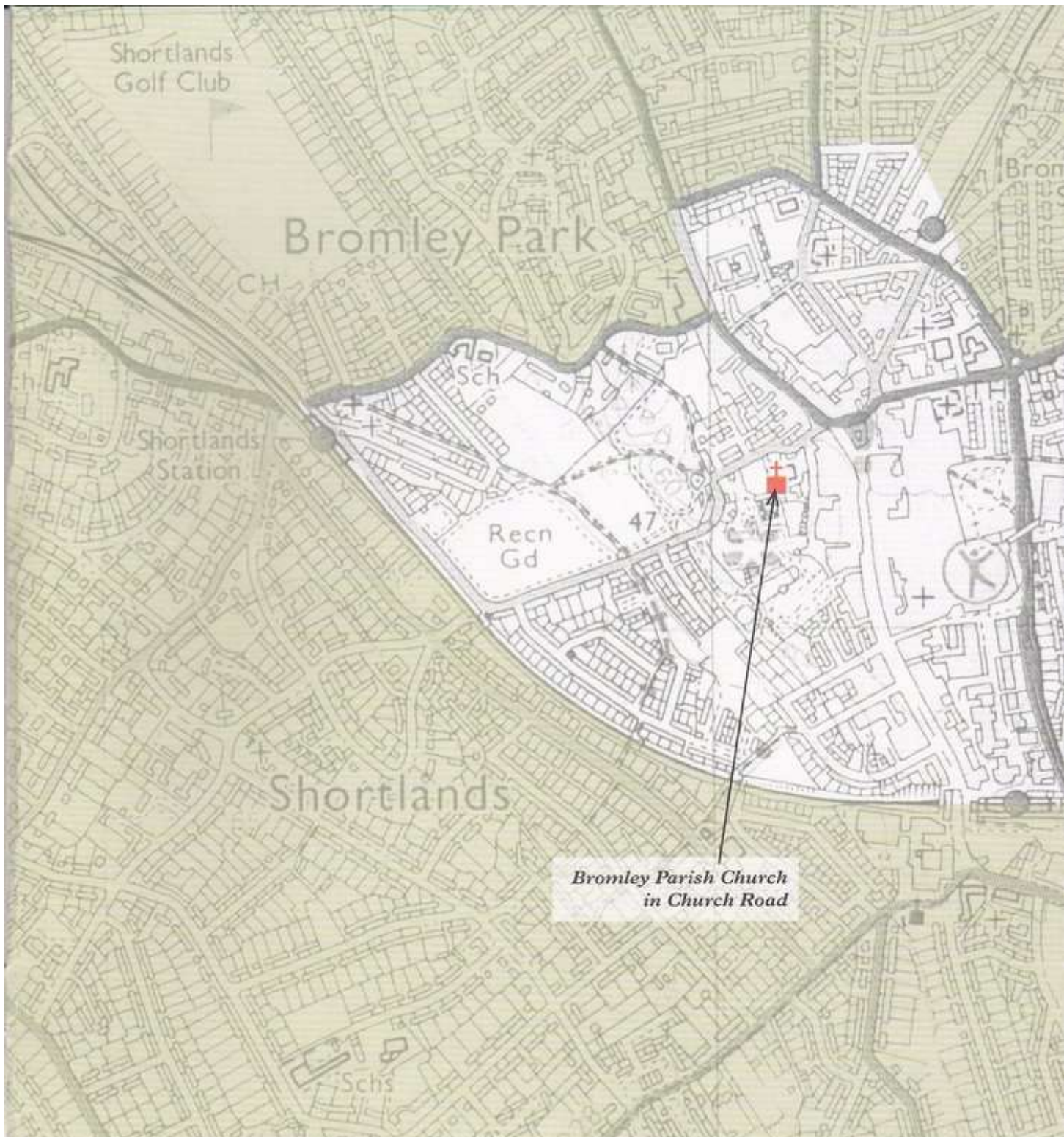
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Shortlands  
Golf Club

Bromley Park

Shortlands  
Station

Sch

Recn  
Gd

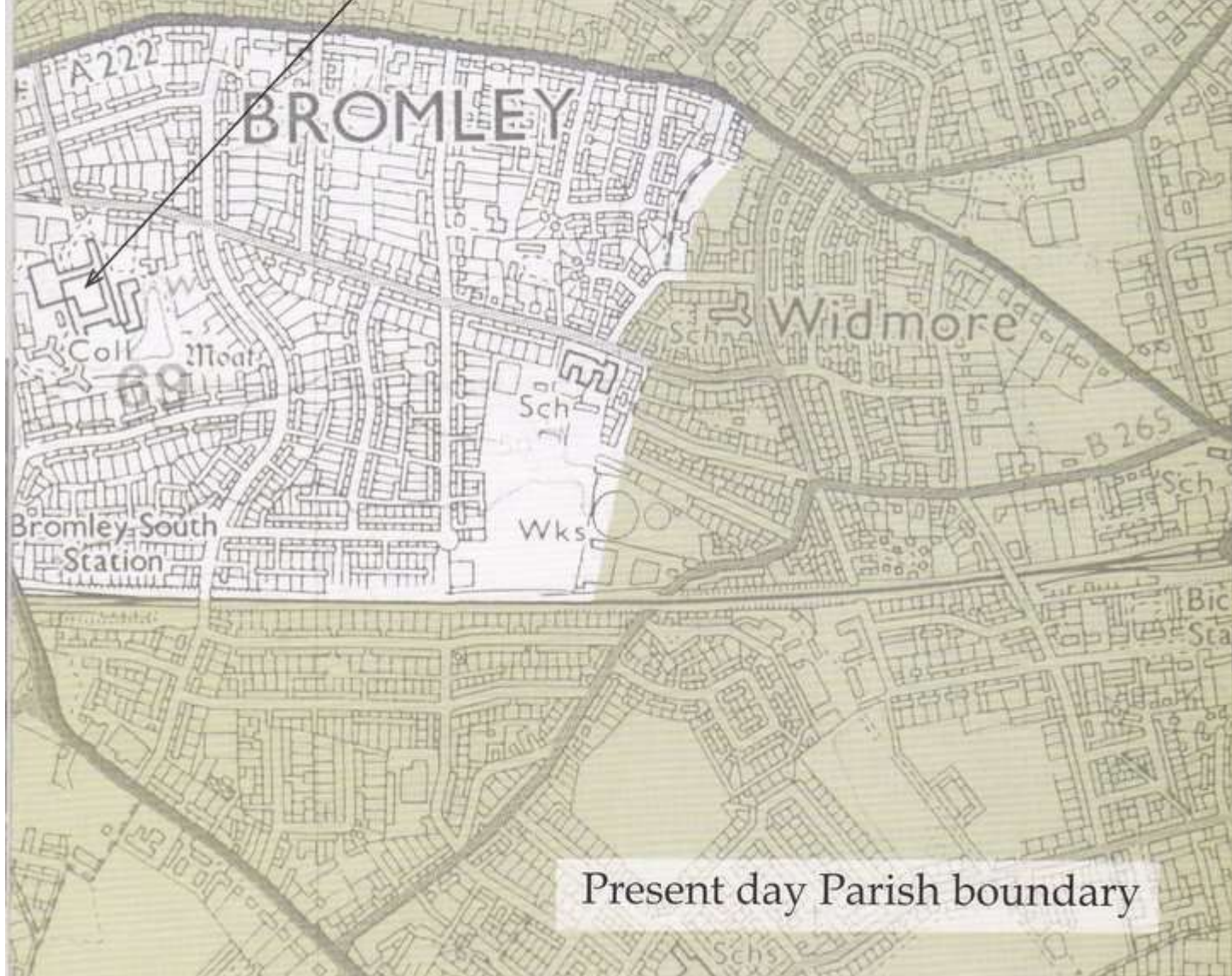
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Shortlands

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*Bromley Parish Church  
in Church Road*

*Civic Centre on the site  
of the former Bishop's  
Palace*



Present day Parish boundary

