

The Parish Of  
*Christ Church*  
Mitcham



An early water colour of Christ Church by William Sleath R.A. c. 1895

*Vicars of Christ Church, Mitcham*

1874-1876	Henry Barber
1876-1906	Francis Stewart Legg
1906-1920	Donald McDonald
1920-1924	Frederick Howard Sheldon
1924-1931	Douglas G. Matthews
1931-1965	Gilbert S. Johnston
1965-1972	David E.C. Jardine
1972-1991	Alan Whittle

The living is at present suspended, and the Reverend M.J. Bull was appointed Priest in charge in January 1993.

Apart from Henry Barber, who left the parish before the first Vestry meeting was held on May 25th 1876, the average length of service for each Vicar has been 18 years - with Legge, McDonald, Johnston and Whittle totalling 97 years between them.

The census of 1871 shows the population of the Parish of Mitcham as 6,495. The Parish church had seating for 1,100 (including children) and the chapels provided seating for a further 505.

In 1864, a temporary Church was built at Singlegate with seating for 220, and in 1873 work began on a permanent Church, with seating for 550, to be called Christ Church. The estimated cost was £4,207, and Mr. and Mrs. Harris, of Goringe Park donated £3000 towards the cost, and a further £1,000 to build the Vicarage.

A site of one acre was obtained in what was then Merton Lane, part of the land being a gift from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and part purchased from a Mr. Daniel Watney for £250. The architects were Messrs Francis of Old Broad Street and the builders Messrs Adamson of Turnham Green. the foundation stone was laid by Mrs. Harris on June 7th 1873 and Christ Church was consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester, the Right Reverend Harold Browne, on Ascension Day, May 14th 1874.

Newspaper reports of the occasion speak of 'the beautiful new church, to be known as Christ Church, Singlegate..... the site of the Church is a slightly elevated one, on which a Vicarage and Sunday School room are also placed. The Revd. Henry Barber, late curate of Trinity Church, Tulse Hill, has been appointed to be the first incumbent.'

### *The Parish Boundaries*

The London Gazette of August 10th 1875 reports the proceedings of the Court of Queen Victoria at Osbourne House, Isle of Wight, on August 5th 1875, when the Queen gave her consent to 'the District Chapelry of Christ Church, Mitcham,' The eastern boundary was the parish of Emmanuel, Streatham, the northern was the district chapelry of Holy Trinity, South Wimbledon and the parish of St. Mary, Merton.

The southern boundary, which divided the district chapelry from the parish of Mitcham, was marked by five boundary stones. The first was placed in Phipps Bridge Road and marked 'M.Ch:Ch:D.C.1875 No.1' and the last (No.5) was placed at the boundary of the parishes of Emmanuel Streatham and Mitcham. The only surviving boundary stone is now kept inside Christ Church.

### *Parish Endowment 1882*

The London Gazette of April 28th 1882 records a gift of £5,000 in favour of the vicarage of Christ Church, Mitcham, which was invested by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to provide an income for the Vicar. This gift is commemorated on a brass plate in the Chancel.

## St. Barnabas, Mitcham.

The London Gazette of December 18th 1914 records the formation of the District Chapelry of St.Barnabas, Mitcham from 'part of the New Parish ( sometime District Chapelry) of Christ Church, Mitcham, in the County of Surrey and the Diocese of Southwark'. The report also mentions the New Parish of St.James, West Streatham, and the District Chapelry of St.Mark, Mitcham.

The District Chapelry of Christ Church, Mitcham became a Parish sometime between 1875 and 1914. The Diocese of Southwark was created in 1905.

### *Further Boundary Changes*

In 1931 the boundaries between Christ Church, St.Nicholas, Tooting and St. Barnabas were altered to conform with the railway line between Merton and Tooting Junction. The Bishop's representation to the King contains some interesting statistics.

According to the 1921 census, the population figures for each parish involved in the boundary changes were as follows:

St,Nicholas Tooting	27,866
St,Mary Summerstown	7,659
Christ Church Mitcham	15,737
St,Mark Mitcham	6,571
St.Barnabas Mitcham	4,839

In 1976 the Runnymede Estate, part of Phipps Bridge Road, Littlers Close, Liberty Flats and Yarborough Rd. were transferred to Christ Church from the parish of St.John, Merton.

Surprisingly, figures produced by the diocese from the 1991 census give the population of the parish as only 7,923 (though these figures do not include the new housing built on the University playing fields since 1991 - a further 1300 dwellings - nor the Mead Park estate in the north west of the parish.)

## *War Damage and Reconstruction*

The following appeared in the personal column of the Times on January 20th 1947:- 'FLYING BOMB. Can any Cathedral, church, give, sell or loan Holy Table (6ft) for blitzed Church reopening shortly - Vicar, Christ Church, Merton Abbey, 2, Wilton Rd. SW19.'

The flying bomb fell in Fortescue Rd. in 1944, destroying 6 houses, the Vicarage and Church Hall, and severely damaging the Church. Reconstruction was paid for by the War Damage Commission, and included a new roof and ceiling for the nave. The chancel roof was reconstructed from salvaged timbers and a new East Window was built. All the windows were reglazed. The stained glass in the chancel and west wall is dated 1953, the year the restoration was completed.

A new south porch was built on the foundations of the old one, and windows salvaged from the Church hall were used.

The organ escaped serious damage from the flying bomb. It was protected from the elements with sheeting, but could not be protected from vandels and thieves. As a result, the organ was eventually written off and replaced in 1947 with a second hand organ from Messrs. R.Spurden Rutt and Co. of Leyton. In November 1949 this organ was destroyed by fire in suspicious circumstances and a replacement organ from the same firm was supplied when the building restoration had been completed.

The advertisement in the Times resulted in an altar being sent from the Revd. Capel C.Peacey, of Carleton Rode Rectory, near Norwich. As the bill for transporting it was less than £2.00 he paid it himself as a donation to the Church. This altar may well be the one still in use in the Chapel. A modern altar is now situated in the sanctuary.

### *Christ Church Bells*

In 1884, a ring of six bells was installed in the tower, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harris, and first rung at their dedication service on March 29th. They were restored in 1934 and are shortly to be retuned and rehung once more. The sizes, notes and weights are as follows;

Size across mouth.	Note.	Weight.
25ins.	G	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt.
26ins	F	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt.
27 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins.	Eb	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt.
28ins.	D	5 cwt.
31ins.	C	5 $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt.
34ins.	Bb	7 cwt.