

## **A brief history of St Michael's Handsworth**

St Michael's is Grade II listed, was designed by the architect William Bourne of Dudley, and built 1852-5. His other buildings include St James' Church, Dudley. It was consecrated on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1855 as a chapel of ease to Handsworth St Mary. A parish was assigned out of St Mary's in 1861, but part of this was taken to form the parish of Handsworth St Peter in 1907. St Peter's Church is in Grove Lane and its building is now owned by a Seventh Day Adventist church.

The living of St Michael's had the status of a perpetual curacy until 1868, when it became a vicarage. The patronage was in the gift of the rector of Handsworth St Mary until being transferred to the Bishop of Lichfield in 1892. St Michael's Mission Room was licensed for worship from 1888 to 1893 and Church House, Soho Road, from 1908-26.

The curate and later vicar of St Michael's, the Revd George Boyle, rented Soho House and lived there with his family during the period 1860-7.

The church is built of sandstone and forms an impressive gateway to Handsworth. The spire, which was added in 1868, can be seen for miles around, and the view is particularly impressive coming up the hill from Winson Green and from the site of Matthew Boulton's park.

### **Some features to note**

- The three manual organ, which dates from 1908 was built by Norman and Beard.
- The striking set of Stations of the Cross in the nave date from the 1930s.
- The baptistry contains a large font of high quality workmanship.
- The chapel of St George on the south side of the church contains wall paintings of some unusual saints including Joan of Arc. Originally the whole of the sanctuary and chancel was painted with frescoes.

Today St Michael's has a faithful regular congregation with a high proportion of children and young people. It serves a vibrant parish.

We have recently demolished the derelict 1960s church hall on the south side of the building, and are creating a community garden in its place. This aims to celebrate our diversity, with plants from across the world, and to bring a place of beauty and a much needed green space to local people.

*The Revd Rowena Pailing February 2010*