

New stained-glass window for Selmeston Church

Designed by Leonie Seliger, Director of stained-glass conservation at Canterbury Cathedral

The idea for a stained-glass window originally came from June Mockett (1930 – 2018) and is dedicated to her memory. June Mockett was a much-loved former parishioner who was deeply attached to the church and regularly contributed financially to it. Mockett is a distinctive local name and has a long history in the parish with several memorials in the churchyard. A chance remark by June to her friends when leaving the church one day in which she expressed her wish that, if it were ever possible, she'd love to see the window to the left of the church door as stained glass to remember the Mocketts has been taken up by them and they are the benefactors for this new window in her memory.

The Parochial Church Council saw an opportunity to celebrate and provide a focus for the newly created Cuckmere Pilgrim Path and to commemorate June Mockett. The Cuckmere Pilgrim Path is a route which has been created linking seven churches around the Cuckmere River. A map incorporating a guide and summary history has been designed by local graphic designer Andrew Gammon and the way has been marked with oak posts and a logo. The route has been established as a spiritual resource for people to use. In addition, a botanical guide to the route and a history guide by a local historian have also been produced. Other resources are being developed for walkers to take with them and to encounter along the way. In each church a station is being created dedicated to walkers and creative material to aid prayer and reflection will be provided – a magnificent new bell is already residing in Alciston Church.

Leonie Seliger, Director of the Cathedral Studios, Canterbury has designed the new window and will be installing it at the end of June for unveiling at the dedication service on July 10th. Leonie studied stained glass design and manufacture in Germany. She joined Canterbury Cathedral's stained-glass studio as a conservator and glass painter in 1991 and has been Director of stained glass conservation since 2005.

The window Leonie has designed takes the topography of the Cuckmere River valley as its inspiration to explore the idea of pilgrimage within this local setting. The blue of the river and the reservoir, the green of the valley, and the white of the chalk hills provide the main palette. Small sparks of gold and amber, together with small dots of crimson line the path; they could be seen as individuals travelling in groups or alone, the crimson being the colour of love and of blood and sacrifice; the gold and amber sparks of inspiration and life.

The white lines travelling through the centre of the green area reference the Long Man of Wilmington, anchoring the design in its surrounding cultural landscape; the lines themselves, however, are not taken from that prehistoric figure, but instead are the outlines of the body of Christ from a drawing by Michelangelo Buonarroti. There are in fact several silhouettes of the crucified Christ hidden in the design. By overlapping these shapes, the central green area creates a new image that is ambiguous, not immediately obvious, but always there and discernable to the subconscious. The pilgrimage route along those vacillating lines becomes a search for the body of Christ.

The window is situated at the back of the church in a position where walkers can sit and rest and reflect and where a small station offering other resources for walkers can be developed.

For more information please contact Stephanie Lewis-Grey.