

CHURCH OF ALL SOULS

EASTBOURNE

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE CLERGY AND PEOPLE OF THIS CHURCH
AND FOR AN EXTENSION OF OUR WITNESS FOR THE LORD IN OUR
TOWN AND PARISH.



A CONCISE HISTORY

LADY VICTORIA WELLESLEY, the foundress of All Souls, was anxious that this should be a church for all. She hoped the name would best express our Lord's invitation in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." It was for this and nothing else that she gave so generously. It was also typical of her that, although she was the great-niece of the Duke of Wellington, she allowed only one reference to herself in the Church.

Having decided to build a church, Lady Wellesley asked William, Duke of Devonshire for his help. He responded generously by granting and conveying the land in 1876 and 1879. Lady Wellesley chose Parr and Strong of London to be the architects and James Peirless of Eastbourne to build. In spite of great difficulty in putting down foundations – they had to be sunk to a depth of 20 feet – the foundation stone was laid on the 14th June 1881 and the whole Church was ready for consecration in just over a year – on the 6th July 1882. While the Church was being built, services were held by the Vicar-designate in a room known as Waverly House School, in Susans Road.

All Souls was copied from an actual church built in the Lombardy district of Italy during the latter part of the 6th century. The style of architecture is called Lombardo-Byzantine in its simple basilica form. Other original examples of this can be seen in Verona, Ravenna and Crema. Another copy is the parish church at Wilton, near Salisbury.

The Lombardo-Byzantine style of architecture has an interesting history. When the Eastern Christians needed a large church for their worship they saw that the Roman Royal Hall of Justice would make an ideal pattern. This was built to contain a large oblong hall with a double colonnade of pillars. At one end there was an arched or domed apse, the whole building being called a basilica.

Later in the 6th century when large churches were needed, the Christians in Italy again adopted the basilica style of architecture, but the Italians added a belfry tower with a connecting porch. It is from one of these that All Souls was copied.

The details here at All Souls are all Eastern in origin. In particular the lamp bowls in the nave and the conventional flowers in the band of the dome over the apse windows, which are Byzantine of the 3rd and 4th centuries.

It will be of interest to know that the height of the church is 51 feet, the length 127 feet and the breadth 86 feet. The height of the bell tower is 83 feet. Originally there was sufficient room to seat 850 people. The pews, like the roof, are of pitch pine and the main doors are of solid oak. When the beam brackets were replaced after World War II, oak from a Norfolk barn, said to be 200 years old, was used.

The pattern of the arcade arches is achieved by using blue and white Horsham stone. The capitals of the pillars, decorated either with floral or geometrical designs, are matched in pairs. The one over the pulpit is the Greek monogram for Christ - sometimes called 'Constantine's Cross'. The one on the opposite capital is a pent Alpha (or letter A repeated five times).

The large wheel window over the west door is another outstanding feature. It is best seen when the sun is in the west in the late afternoon. This beautiful stained glass window, together with the six windows in the apse, were all given by the God-children of Lady Victoria Wellesley, in her memory, in 1898.

The tablets on the south wall commemorate Old Contemptibles of the First World War and the Royal Engineers who served in Burma in the Second World War. One of the Lectern Bibles is the gift of officers of the 12th Service Battalion, the Lancashire Fusiliers, who made All Souls their regimental Church during the 1914-18 war.

Also on the south wall there is a modern stained glass window (this replaced the original window which was destroyed by indiscriminate bombing on 14th September 1940) and was given by Mr & Mrs T Collett. It commemorates all who lost their lives in the two world wars.

On the reredos behind the Holy Table, Italian craftsmen set the 23rd Psalm in mosaics on either side of the stepped cross. Above each panel is a symbolic sign (a) Alpha (the first), (b) interpreted to mean "I am", (c) monogram

(Greek) "Jesus", (d) Christ (Greek), (e) Good Shepherd (Latin), (f) Omega (the last).

The whole of the raised chancel floor from the Holy Table to the pulpit had to be repaired in 1964. This was necessary because it had begun to subside most dangerously. The operation was difficult and expensive as piles had to be sunk and girders introduced to carry the new flooring. The cost of these repairs, which was £3,750, was a very heavy burden on the Church's resources.

Following the closing of the church and hall during part of the Second World War, dry rot was found in the Church Hall, and to replace the necessary timbers and other work, cost almost £1,750 in 1967.

Probably the most striking feature outside the church is the freestanding Campanile or bell tower. It was originally provided with a peal of five bells cast at Whitechapel Bell Foundry in 1882. The tenor bell alone weighed just over 9½ cwt. and the peal was in the key of G. Unfortunately the tower was too slender to withstand the vibration so they were not rung after 1908. Finally in 1966 the original bells were taken away and a new 6½ cwt. tenor bell, note C, was installed. The new bell carries the inscription:

VICTORIA

Installed 1966

"Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The name Victoria is in honour of our foundress and the inscription from our lord's invitation is particularly appropriate for a bell calling the people of Eastbourne to worship.

Above the west door is an eye set in a triangle, which is the symbol of an all-seeing God. Lower down on either side are the cross and dove.

As you walk round to Wellesley Road do not miss the beautiful apse. It is just like the one at Ravenna and is in itself a great tribute to our foundress, the architect and builders who made All Souls possible.