

THE PARISH CHURCH OF OUR MOST HOLY REDEEMER

CLERKENWELL



Christo Liberatori

*Standing in Exmouth Market, Clerkenwell,
the Church of Our Most Holy Redeemer
is a remarkable building,
dating from the late Victorian period
and built in the Italian Renaissance style.*

A Century of Service

FROM its consecration in October 1888, the Church of Our Most Holy Redeemer has been a bastion of the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Beginning as a mission church founded from Saint Philip's, Granville Square on the site of the Countess of Huntingdon's Spa Fields Chapel, the building was not to be of the popular 'cheap Gothic' type, but rather 'stately and impressive, uplifting the minds and hearts of those who dwelt beneath its shadow'. And so the first vicar, Father Eyre, recruited the architectural talents of John Dando Sedding, architect of several



notable London churches including Holy Trinity, Sloane Street. The church interior was modelled upon Brunelleschi's famous church of Santo Spirito in Florence and the exterior given the feel of an Italian basilica, with its gabled front, generous eaves and deep cornice as well as the Latin inscription, 'Christo Liberatori' (To Christ the Redeemer).

Externally, the church has changed much from its initial appearance with the addition of the Clergy House and Campanile on the south side in 1906, and that of the Institute building, containing the parish hall and what were once nuns' cells and rooms for the 'bettering of the poor', on the north side in 1916. The plans for both were drawn up by Henry Wilson, who had collaborated with Sedding on the original design and who went on to oversee all the subsequent additions for nearly 50 years, thus giving the building a remarkable unity.

The worship and ceremonial, although from the Book of Common Prayer, had a distinctly continental feel. Indeed, a none-too-complimentary view of the church's 10th anniversary services in 1898 was published in the volume 'The Roman Mass in the English Church: Illegal Services Described By Eye-Witnesses'. However, Father Eyre fought against this 'tendency to think of our own English form of Catholicism as though it were not simply such, but almost a distinct faith and religion, Anglicanism'. The use of vestments, incense, bells, candles and due reverence to the Sacrament were then and are still now seen as in accordance with the infinite glory, power and majesty of God. This sense of dignity and beauty is obvious throughout the building itself, the fittings and the worship.

The Baldachino

THE imposing baldachino perhaps demonstrates best the influence of Brunelleschi's Santo Spirito. The structure is in fact mainly wooden, as were the original steps and sanctuary floor, for the marble steps and floor were not installed until 1938 in preparation for the 50th anniversary celebrations. The capitals on the columns are the work of F. W. Pomeroy who established a fair reputation as a sculptor. The figure of 'The Living Christ and yet the Crucified', which now surmounts the baldachino, was designed by Wilson in 1927 as a memorial to Father Eyre and originally stood where the Altar of Our Lady of Walsingham is now. The original design had the figure seemingly dancing off a wooden cross, but the figure alone was raised to its present position after the Second World War.

The Lady Chapel

THE Lady Chapel behind the sanctuary was part of the original design, but due to a shortage of money, it was not completed until 1895. Previously a temporary wall existed along the line of the back of the baldachino and the chapel arches. The reredos and altar steps were added in 1909 and the wooden panelling in 1930, while the altar itself, designed by G. E. Sedding, was dedicated in 1913 for the 25th anniversary festival. The statues of Saint Pancras and the Blessed Virgin Mary, which now flank the altar, represented the Guilds that the church organised for children. A postcard from 1914 shows an altar of Saint Mary Magdalene on the south wall of the Lady Chapel. However, this may have been a temporary measure while the current altar panelling for the Chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene was being built.

The Altar of Our Lady of Walsingham



THE Altar of Our Lady of Walsingham on the south side was the latest addition to the church, some time in the 1960s, as a result of the close links between the parish and the shrine at Walsingham. In addition to regular pilgrimages from the parish, the church has been home

to a Cell of The Society of The Holy House of Our Lady of Walsingham.

The Organ

THE organ, by Willis, mounted on the gallery at the back of the church, is an interesting instrument, though sadly in poor condition now.

Elements were formerly in the Chapel Royal at Windsor Castle, and were reassembled in the church in 1889, with extra pipes and pedals added during the 1890s.

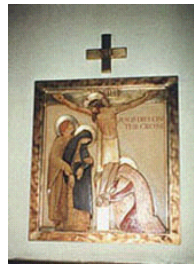
The Calvary and Paintings



THE Calvary at the west end of the church dates from the last century and has changed, though at times there have been curtains behind it.

The paintings adorning the walls of the church are the work of Lillian Reynolds, an artist who worshipped at the church during the first half of the nineteenth century. Her works are mainly copies of the Italian Masters, the most striking being the copy of Perugino's Virgin and Child which, hangs above the altar in the Lady Chapel.

Stations of the Cross



THE Stations of the Cross, erected in 1931, are the work of J. E. Crawford, an associate of the famous Martin Travers, and are rather fine examples of their period.

The Chapel of All Souls

THE Chapel of All Souls, in the north aisle was completed in 1922, again according to Wilson's design, as a memorial to those who died in the First World War. The altar is of alabaster and the life-sized pieta of bronzed plaster, and there is a mortuary chamber behind the walnut doors and alabaster memorial plaques.

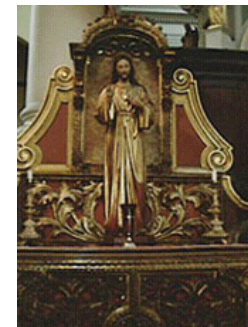
The Chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene



THE Chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene in the south aisle was seemingly part of the church's original design and the present altar claims it was given in memory of Emma Foulger, who died in 1884. However, a postcard from 1914 shows a different altar with an IHS inscription and a painting of Saint Mary

above it, while another photograph shows the altar now dedicated to the Sacred Heart in this position. The present panelling and figure of Saint Mary Magdalene were added some time before 1938.

The Altar of the Sacred Heart of Jesus



THE date of the construction of the Altar of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the north side is a matter of speculation, though the altar, statue and canopy were certainly in place in 1938. The extended panels on the sides and back of the altar were added in the late

1950s. However a photograph from the late 1920s or early 1930s shows the altar and canopy, without the statue, in the Chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene.

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