

St. Anne's Church

Located in the centre of St. Anne and surrounded by a well cared-for churchyard, this beautiful church is often referred to as "The Cathedral of the Channel Islands".

The church of St Anne, consecrated in 1850 and built to the design of Mr George Gilbert Scott, is acknowledged to be one of the finest Victorian buildings in the Channel Islands. Scott was one of the most prolific architects of the 19th century and apart from a considerable amount of restoration work on ecclesiastical buildings, including Westminster Abbey, he was also responsible for the Albert Memorial in London (recently restored), the Foreign Office and the St Pancras Station Hotel.

The church is often referred to as 'the cathedral church of the Channel Islands' because of its size but the original intention was that it should serve not only as a parish church for the island but also as the garrison church for the military stationed here in the mid 19th century; a time when the island was being heavily fortified against any potential threat of invasion by France, only a few miles away.

The present building, dedicated to St Anne, Mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary, replaced the ancient mediaeval building which was situated in the old churchyard adjacent to the Island Museum, but was demolished in the mid 19th century with the exception of the tower, which still serves as a clock tower. The new building, situated on a hillside between Victoria Street (from which it is approached through the Albert Gate) and La Vallee, was the gift of the Reverend Canon John Le Mesurier, the son of the last Hereditary Governor of Alderney, in memory of his parents at a cost estimated then to have been some £8,000.

The church is cruciform in the transitional style from Norman to Early English with a clear French influence and is constructed of local granite with Caen stone dressings. The best impression of the interior is gained by taking a direct view from underneath the west window towards the high altar, the eye moving from the stolid round pillars of the nave towards the soaring arches which become increasingly more ornate through the body of the church to the apsidal sanctuary which was, in itself, a prototype to be used subsequently by Scott in the design of six further churches.

The Bells

The church has a peal of six bells which are rung for Sunday services and, when required, for the Occasional Offices. The bells were removed during the German Occupation and four were sent to Cherbourg on their

way to be melted down for munitions. They were identified after the War by the Garrison Engineer and returned. Together with the two bells remaining in Alderney they were sent to England for re-casting before being re-hung as part of the overall restoration.

The War and Subsequent Restoration

The church, like so much of the Island, suffered from the German Occupation and was cleared and used as a general store for the duration. A machine-gun post was set up in the belfry and the walls still display the graffiti carved into the stonework by bored soldiers. Almost all the pews were removed from the church and the Island was subsequently faced with a considerable amount of restoration work quite apart from the domestic devastation caused during those unhappy years. The work was eventually completed in 1953 and the church re-dedicated by the Bishop of Winchester on 11th June that year.

The Old Church Bible

The Old Church Bible, displayed in a case next to the lectern, was only re-discovered on Maundy Thursday 1998. It was returned to the Island by the widow of a former Padre to the German Forces stationed in Alderney in 1942. A soldier had brought the Bible to the chaplain (presumably during the clearance of the church) who removed it to Germany after his posting where it remained in his possession as a treasured part of his library. His widow was anxious to return it before she, herself, died and made the trip to Alderney in the company of her Lutheran Pastor and his wife for that express purpose; an act for which the parish is enormously grateful.

Dated 1683 the Bible is bound in with a copy of the Book of Common Prayer and a Metrical Psalter dated 1679. Parts of the Prayer Book were clearly damaged by damp at some stage and the ruined pages replaced with handwritten sheets written in exquisite small copperplate.

The Island is justly proud of its church and we very much hope that you have enjoyed your visit.

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