

St Philip and All Saints Marchwiël



The original All Saints Church (established 1907)



What the original All Saints site looks like now

All Saints 100th Anniversary (1907-2007)



Mr Woolcombe's house "Asbury" Timaru NZ 1874 - Artist: Sir Eliot, Whately, 1841-1927.



The limestone font, which was originally in old St Mary's.

All Saints

All Saints was the first Anglican church in the northern part of Timaru. The area is associated with Captain Belfield Woollcombe and his family, who arrived in Timaru in 1858, when there were only two houses here. His first home was a shed on the beach, with wool bales for walls. Woollcombe became in effect the local representative of the British Government: he was appointed resident magistrate, harbour master, coroner, and provincial sub-treasurer, then returning officer, official registrar of births, deaths and marriages, immigration officer, deputy commissioner of police, commissioner of native reserves, sub-editor of customs, and visiting justice representative to the jail. He laid down the foundations of civic order in the district, and came to be known as the “father” of Timaru. He was also the first church warden of St Mary’s Anglican Church, helping to construct the original wooden building on the site.

Woollcombe moved to a cob hut near the present Te Weka Street, and then built his home in this area, on 87 acres overlooking the Waimataitai estuary and lagoon, now Ashbury Park. While he was building his new house, Bishop Harper and three clergymen paid him a surprise visit. Under his warm hospitality, they spread their blankets on the floor and spent the night there. The house, named after Woollcombe’s home in England, no longer stands, but many of the English trees Woollcombe planted remain on the southern end of the park.

In 1861, Woollcombe married Frances, the daughter of the Rev. Henry Fendall, Vicar of Heathcote, Christchurch, and the newlyweds spent their honeymoon on a three-week journey to Timaru by bullock cart. The Woollcombe’s first baby, a daughter, was the third European child born in Timaru, and another daughter, Katherine, was baptised in the limestone font, which was originally in old St Mary’s, then moved to All Saints, and is now in the chapel at St Philip’s. Mrs. Woollcombe’s sister, Mary Eliza, and her husband Philip Bouverie Luxmoore also settled in a home in the area, calling it “Marchwiell” after Philip’s home in Wales. This large house, on the site now at the junction of Macdonald and Bouverie Streets, was destroyed in a fire before the 1960s.



The brick All Saints building in Evans Street (established 1924). The church is in the centre of this photograph. The original wooden church is visible in the distance, to the left of the roof.



The view of the brick building today.

The Woollcombe family were closely connected with All Saints. Mrs. Woollcombe started a Sunday School in her dining room at Ashbury in 1879, with 11 children. This Sunday School was later transferred to the Waimataitai State School and then in 1907 to a small wooden church on the Woollcombe property. Every other Sunday church services were held here, and the congregation grew until in 1924 a brick Methodist chapel in Evans Street was bought for 455 pounds, with a Sunday School added on behind. The original wooden church was sold and converted into a house in Marchwiell Street. A sewing guild, which met in private homes to sew for war relief and for St Saviours Home, evolved into the Guild of Help, the oldest in Timaru. The Misses Woollcombe, Chrysta and Katherine, taught at the Sunday School and worked for All Saints for 60 years. Miss Olive Barker was also a devoted member of the church and was awarded the British Empire Medal for Community Services in 1971.

The All Saints church bell was originally a fire bell. The altar cross was donated by the Misses Woollcombe in memory of Canon Hare. Two carved chairs were donated in memory of the Stockwell and Brown families, and a brass plate in memory of the Burrell family. Christchurch sculptor Frederick Gurnsey was commissioned to design and carve the oak reredos (in memory of Katherine Woollcombe), altar rails (in memory of Chrysta Woollcombe), prayer desk and lectern (1937-51).

All Saints' 50th jubilee was celebrated over four days in 1957, with special church services, a family dance and parties for the Sunday School children. One hundred and fifty parishioners, past and present, attended the Thanksgiving Banquet, where the oldest member of the congregation, Mrs. G. Tapp, cut the jubilee cake. Ten years later, All Saints marked their 60th anniversary.



133 Evans Street today.



St Philip and All Saints, Marchiel. The All Saints Chapel is attached to the present church.



The All Saints Chapel today

St Philip's

St Philip's, dedicated in 1950, was originally in the northern part of St John's parish, the name commemorating Philip Luxmoore. In 1951, land donated by the Lewis family was approved as a suitable site for a new church, which was built originally as a church hall with doors closing off the sanctuary when necessary. In 1963 a meeting of parishioners asked for parochial district status for both St Philip's and All Saints. Rev. Ian Cooper was the first vicar at St Philip's. In 1964 the church building of St Aidan's was moved from Geraldine to Washdyke, where combined services were held with Presbyterians until it was closed in 1972. In 1965 a vicarage was built at 213 Selwyn Street, next to the church grounds. The following year what is now the front hall was moved here from Tengawai parish in Pleasant Point and a building bought from the South Canterbury Hospital Board was placed behind this hall. Then in 1968, to a design by the architect D.E. Donnithorne, the church itself was completely renovated, refurbished and dedicated. The Mothers' Union banner having been dedicated in 1966, the congregation led the way in Timaru, and possibly New Zealand, by electing Mrs. Hazel Brenton as people's warden in 1972. An AAW group was started the following year, with Margaret Forrest as the first president.

St Philip and All Saints

In 1978, after much soul searching and discussion, All Saints and St Philip's combined. The Evans Street chapel was deconsecrated and sold. The original brick building still stands, having been redesigned as a private home. Money from the sale was set aside for the construction of a new chapel where the St Mary's font, the carvings by Frederick Gurnsey and other furnishings could be kept. This was proudly consecrated in 1993. In 1994, the congregation took another courageous step in embarking on the first calling process and commissioning for total ministry. This means that we have no stipend vicar and the work in the parish is shared among members of the congregation. We have now come to the end of our fourth calling and, with the help of our enablers, Rev. Andrew Starky and Rev. Jill Maslin, we are still going strong as we move into the twenty-first century.



(Above and below) The house on the corner of Marchwiel and Selwyn Streets, incorporating the original All Saints wooden building.

All Saints clergy

When All Saints was in the parish of St Mary's:

Archdeacon H.W. Harper (1875-1911)

Archdeacon J.A. Jacob (1912-1921)

Archdeacon J.A. Julius (1921-1927)

Archdeacon H.W. Monaghan (1928-1937)

When All Saints was in the parish of St John's:

Canon H. Nelson Wright (1937-1943)

Rev. L.A. Barnes (1942-1951)

Rev. R.P. Andrews (1951-1957)

Rev. A.H. Teulon (1957-1963)

Rev. H. Thompson (relieving vicar)

When All Saints was in the Marchwiell parish:

Rev. I. Cooper

Rev. R. McLay

Rev. M. Brown

Rev. M. Harris

Rev. K. Davy

Rev. A. Alan Johns

Total ministry priests:

Rev. Joy Walkinshaw

Rev. Pauline Geddes

Rev. Garrick Walkinshaw

Rev. Sue Dickson

Rev. Steve Allcutt

Rev. Eunice Penman

Local place names with All Saints connections

Ashbury Park

Luxmoore Road

Ashbury Avenue

Marchwiell Street

Belfield Street

Woollcombe Street

Bouverie Street



Inside the old Evans Street church, with the wood carvings by Frederick Gurnsey in place.



The Gurnsey wood carvings in the chapel at St Philip and All Saints.

Frederick George Gurnsey (1868-1953)

Frederick Gurnsey is “one of the greatest European carvers ever to have worked in New Zealand.” * He was born in England and studied carving as a teenager before taking on an apprenticeship and employment in Exeter with Harry Hems (1842-1916), one of the most prolific ecclesiastical workshops in Victorian England. While perfecting his craft, he studied at the prestigious Central School of Arts and Crafts in London and then at the School of Applied Art in Edinburgh. In 1900 he inherited from his brother-in-law the running of Elliott’s Antiques in Bristol, stepping into the world of antiques “with the utmost confidence.”

Tuberculosis brought Gurnsey to New Zealand as part of his cure. While here, he accepted a post as instructor at the Canterbury College School of Art (now the Canterbury University School of Fine Arts) and he and his family moved out here permanently in 1907. As teacher, he was instrumental in bringing the Arts and Crafts and Neogothic styles to New Zealand. He was so successful with his private commissions that he resigned as tutor in 1923, to work full time as a sculptor until his death.

His work may be seen in Wellington, Otago and throughout Canterbury: on the Bridge of Remembrance and in the Cathedral in Christchurch, and in smaller country churches such as St. Thomas’s in Woodbury and the Church of the Good Shepherd, Tekapo. Working in metal, stone and wood, he created “christening spoons and clocks, pulpits and prayer desks.” Too modest to sign his pieces, his work is recognisable by his trademark angels and roses, although he liked to introduce local flora and fauna as well, often with gentle wit. No two of his angels are the same, and each time he lovingly carved a rose, whether a realistic bloom or the stylised Tudor rose, he will have thought of his quiet and loyal wife, Rose Ellen. His son Arthur says that his father was a staunch Anglican who loved “things mystical, metaphysical, transcendental ... in all his thinking he was a humanitarian idealist.”

Gurnsey was commemorated in a retrospective exhibition, *Angels and Roses*, at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch in 1997. Timaru is fortunate to have examples of his work still in use, in St Mary’s Church and the chapel of St Anthony of Padua at Craighead Diocesan School. The only other place locally where his work can be seen is here in the chapel at St Philip’s and All Saints, Marchwiell.

* The quotations used here are from: Mark Stocker, *Angels and Roses: The Art of Frederick George Gurnsey* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1997).

