



The Parish Church of All Saints, Leamington Spa

Invitation to Tender

Church Architect



'This is a church as out of the ordinary for scale as for style'
Pevsner

Introduction

The PCC of All Saints, Leamington Priors (Leamington Spa), a Parish Church of the Church of England Diocese of Coventry, is seeking to engage a fully accredited Conservation Architect for Quinquennial Inspections and repair projects. This is necessitated by the impending retirement of our current Architect, Mark Evans, who has served All Saints since 2004.

All Saints - known throughout the town as 'the Parish Church' - is situated at the south end of the Parade, which is the main road running north to south through the town. A staging-post for buses is just outside, and the railway station is about five minutes' walk away. Leamington Spa is easily accessed from the M40 and the A46.

The building can be viewed externally at any time and from all aspects. Binoculars are recommended. Internal visits are welcome and opening hours are normally 11.00am to 4.00pm Tuesday-Saturday, but note that there are several forthcoming Saturday bookings.

The street address is:

All Saints' Parish Church, Victoria Terrace, Leamington Spa.

Nearest Satnav postcode: CV31 1AA.

For posted mail, use PO Box 163, Leamington Spa, CV31 1GF.

The Church Building: History and Description

There was a priest, and by implication, a church building in Leamington at the time of the Domesday Book. During the 19th century, as the village of Leamington Priors grew rapidly to become the town of Royal Leamington Spa, the medieval building was extended, but the space was insufficient for the growing numbers attending. The Vicar, the Rev John Craig (in post 1839-77), had ambitious plans for a grand new church, which was to be built over the old church, and for which he would be the main architect.

The current church was constructed between 1843 and 1902 in the Continental Gothic style. Construction was piecemeal, and less elaborate than envisaged. The South Transept was not begun until 1867; the two western Nave bays and the western Bell Tower were added by Sir Arthur Blomfield from 1898. Provision had originally been made for a central tower and spire, the height of which would exceed that of Salisbury Cathedral. This was never built, as the pillars in the Crossing were not sufficiently substantial.

The walls are very soft local sandstone, and brick faced with sandstone. Part of the South Transept has been rebuilt using Hollington stone; there are significant areas of render, especially on the North side, covering stone in an unknown but almost certainly poor condition. There is a long history of problems with the stonework. The roof is almost entirely slate, the high-level roofs being steeply pitched. The building is 172 feet long, 100 feet wide across the Transepts, and 80 feet high. The Bell Tower is 145 feet high.

The building comprises an apsed Chancel; Crossing; aisled Nave of six bays with a Gallery occupying the two western bays; South Transept with porch; North Transept with side entrance; two chapels East of the South Transept (Memorial Chapel and All Souls' Chapel); a chapel East of the North Transept (the Lady Chapel) with Organ Loft above; a Clergy Vestry in the north-east corner; a Clock Tower with spire West of the Vestry; and a Choir Vestry West of the Clock Tower.

The space beneath the Gallery was converted into a meeting room (the Urquhart Room) in about 1986, and refurbished in 2000. It includes toilets, kitchen, and a small mezzanine office. It has its own gas-fired wet heating system. The PCC has run a cafe in this area for over thirty years, and it is used outside cafe hours by church and community groups. The



spiral staircase to the Office continues up to the North Nave roof, also providing safe access to the North Transept West roof.

The Lady Chapel is screened with glass, and shares a gas-fired wet heating system with the adjacent Clergy Vestry. It is used for smaller services, and occasionally for church meetings.

The Nave is heated by two industrial gas-fired warm air heaters, housed in purpose-built boiler rooms in the Western corners of the transepts and aisles. Main services and large community events are held in the Nave, including concerts and recitals, exhibitions, lectures, and occasionally conferences and dinners. Seats can be arranged flexibly or cleared, leaving a substantial level area. There is a PA system and a large four-manual organ.

The normal public access to the building is through the door at the base of the Western tower, facing the Parade. Automatic entrance doors, and a ramp integrated into the stepped plinth outside, cater for mobility access needs.

The Western (Bell) Tower is accessed by an internal staircase. There is a ringing chamber, and a room above from which there is access to the South Nave roof (and from there, to the Central Tower roof and the South Transept West roof). The access requires improvement. Above is the bell chamber containing 8 bells. These are rung regularly. Above the bell chamber is a steel mesh floor, constructed for mobile phone transmission equipment. This was installed but never commissioned, and has been removed. There is a steep fixed ladder with handrails up to a hatch which gives access to the Bell Tower roof.

The Clock Tower has an internal staircase, which also gives access to the Organ Loft. The Organ Blower is situated by the staircase at first floor level. The Clock itself is electronically controlled with an auto-winder. There is perilous access to the North Transept East roof, leading to a very narrow unfenced access around the Chancel roof to the South Transept East roof. Roped access operatives assist with any access to the high-level roofs in this area.

Inside, the building is notable for its substantial and gracious space. There is some high quality stained glass, including the three stunning windows in the Apse; impressive local ironwork including the Chancel screen; and a gilded reredos of historic interest in All Souls' Chapel. The very large, intricate rose window in the South Transept is a particular feature. The ceilings in the Lady Chapel and the Apse are painted. There are some interesting depictions of the Annunciation and the Nativity painted on tin in the Lady Chapel. The organ is by Hill, Norman & Beard, and is one of the larger instruments in the area. The church has a fine collection of altar hangings and associated textiles, many of them made by a church guild in the late 19th and early 20th century. The rear screen to the Urquhart Room and the organ case in the Chancel are from the redundant church of Holy Trinity, Rugby.

Emergency exits are provided through the West, North, and South doors. The North door has steps outside; the other exits are level.

Externally, to the north side of the church adjacent to Priory Terrace, there are five parking spaces, two of which are marked for disabled drivers/passengers. There is also a small fenced yard for rubbish and recycling bins and other maintenance necessities, including a kiosk containing the gas meter. Steps give access to the Crypt, which lies beneath the North Transept and Lady Chapel. The Crypt consists of an ante-room, and two corridors, with a number of vaults (each containing around 6 coffins) on each side of each corridor. Coffins are in situ and are bricked in. The roof is low.

There is a very small East yard behind a low wall and railings, giving access to the East end of the Clergy Vestry and Lady Chapel/Organ Loft and the North side of the Chancel.

On the South side of the Chancel, east of the chapels, lies the East Garden. This is enclosed by railings and has a central mown area of grass surrounded by long grass and wild flowers. It is used as a quiet space. Currently, a double table tomb within the area is awaiting attention by the local authority, and is enclosed in Heras fencing.

South of the Nave is another enclosed area. This contains the table tomb in memory of Benjamin Satchwell, one of the founders of the Spa.

The church owns most of the paved frontage between the West end and the Parade, with the exception of an area around and including a blue steel sculpture, which marks the site of the first spa well house.

The churchyard extends to the south of the church, bounded by Church Street and Gloucester Street. It was closed in 1851. A bomb landed in the churchyard during World War II, destroying many of the gravestones, all of which were subsequently cleared; maintenance responsibility was transferred to the local authority (now Warwick District Council) in 1947. The second of two post-war landscaping schemes, consisting of mown grass and informally planted Prunus trees, had reached the end of its life cycle in the early years of this century as the last of the Prunus trees died, leaving a bare expanse of grass with some mature trees around the perimeter. Seating had been removed due to anti-social behaviour. Recently, a community eco project established by the church and staffed by local volunteers has carried out extensive wildflower planting, planted a hedge along the unsightly Western boundary, and planted new trees. Permission and funds are currently being sought for a labyrinth, to be created in the centre of the grassed area.

There is vehicular access from Church Street into the churchyard, with four parking spaces on hard standing alongside the East Garden. A bollard prevents vehicle access from the Parade. There is level loading access into the church building through the South Porch. A pedestrian gateway on Gloucester Street provides additional churchyard access.

The church is listed Grade II*.

The church building sits within the Royal Leamington Spa Conservation Area, and forms part of a group of significant Victorian structures, along with Victoria Bridge and the Pump Rooms. It dominates the lower part of the Parade, and is an important part of the townscape when viewed from Jephson Gardens, the Pump Room Gardens, and the railway line. It stands on the fulcrum between the largely prosperous part of the town north of the river, characterised by wide streets and gracious white-painted terraces, and the narrower streets and smaller shops leading south towards the railway line and canal.

In recent years, the local demographic has changed to include significantly more students from the University of Warwick. There is also an increase in residential accommodation nearby. The development of a Cultural Quarter by the local authority includes 1 Mill Street (the former church hall), about 100 yards East of the church, and Spencer Yard, about 100 yards West of the church, giving fresh opportunities for cultural engagement and partnerships.

Church Fabric and Repair Needs

Since the last QI, the PCC has re-roofed the Organ Loft and carried out significant patch repairs to the Chancel and North Transept. The Lady Chapel has been refurbished following flood damage from the previous, failed, Organ Loft roof. The corona at the top of the Bell Tower has been pinned and wired in place, with loose and fragmenting stone removed. The PCC has continued to maintain and test the services, including regular cleaning of the roofs, hoppers, and pipes, and implementation of required updates to the electrical system. As funds have become available, improvements have been made to energy efficiency, including the replacement of the Urquhart Room and Lady Chapel light fittings with LED units. Most of the light fittings in the church are now LEDs. The gas boiler in the Urquhart Room kitchen has been replaced.

The South Aisle was re-roofed in 2016 and the North Aisle was re-roofed within the last 20 years. The roof valley between the Clergy Vestry and the Lady Chapel was re-laid about ten years ago although it remains troublesome.

There are a number of known high-priority areas for repair when funds can be secured. The major tasks are as follows:

- Re-roof the Nave and Transepts, the space which is critical to all events taking place in the building;
- Re-lead the Nave Clerestory windows;
- Rebuild the four stone columns at the corners of the South Porch and South Transept;
- Rebuild the South Aisle flying buttress;
- Extensive further general stonework repairs;
- Re-roof the Chancel and modify the troublesome drainage route;
- Replace the drainpipes to the East of the South Chapels;
- Re-route the Clergy Vestry North side drainage;
- Re-lead the Apse North lancet window (clear glass);
- Restore the Apse South lancet window (stained glass);
- Re-lead the Clock Tower lancet windows;
- Further window repairs;
- Investigate and eradicate rising damp at the West end and the South-East corner;
- Re-roof the Lady Chapel Sanctuary and rebuild the roof parapet;
- Re-roof the South Porch;
- Increase capacity and reliability of rainwater disposal routes;
- Install safer roof access;
- Investigate/install solar panels to South Aisle roof;
- Investigate and transition heating to Carbon Net Zero.

The extent of repairs which are required mean that, notwithstanding the projects already accomplished and the efforts of the PCC to keep the building wind and water tight, All Saints is on the Historic England Heritage At Risk register.

In addition to the record provided by Quinquennial Inspections and the Log Book, there was a survey of the church by Alan Baxter Associates in 2012. This considered and costed the repair needs in more detail. The PCC has not yet been successful in obtaining the funding needed to implement the repairs.



In order to maintain and develop the work of the church, further capital and repair projects are also necessary, including:

- Refurbishment of the toilet facilities;
- Repair and redecoration of the Clergy Vestry;
- Cleaning and restoration of the Organ;
- Provision of a small meeting room, perhaps on first-floor level behind the Gallery staircase;
- Provision of a lift to give access to the Chancel from the Lady Chapel.

Whilst the task list is daunting and currently unfunded, the PCC is committed to keeping the church open and develop its use. The cost of repairs should also be viewed in the light of the prosperity of the town, and the potential for finding fresh sources of funding.

Church Activities

The PCC aims to keep the building open as much as possible, and to strike a balance between its accessibility to worshippers and other visitors, and its use for closed or ticketed events. The cafe, currently run by Ukrainian refugees, normally runs during the daytime Tuesday-Saturday. In 2023 there were 50 events in the Nave (including exhibitions lasting for several days), and over 120 community group meetings, mainly during the evenings. There is a steady flow of casual visitors, especially during the lighter months.

The seating capacity in the Nave is limited to 560, allowing for a symphony orchestra, choir, and sizeable audience whilst maintaining suitable evacuation routes. Occasionally all the chairs are cleared to make space for large exhibitions.

Worship is in the liberal catholic Eucharistic tradition, with a large and growing adult robed choir and a recently re-introduced children's section. Excellence in music is a particular strength which draws in musicians and others to the congregation. Currently there are eight Choral Scholars and one Organ Scholar, all from Warwick University. The church is a member of the Inclusive Church network, and has an established support group for LGBT+ Christians of any tradition. It has also achieved the Bronze Eco-Church award.

As Leamington's historic Parish Church, All Saints regularly hosts civic services and other large gatherings.

All Saints has shared an incumbent with Holy Trinity, Leamington Spa, since 1995, although the pairing has not been satisfactory. In 2023 an Associate Priest was Licensed to care for Holy Trinity, with a view to each church having its own incumbent in the foreseeable future. This has made a substantial difference to leadership capacity at both churches.

The current incumbent, Fr Christopher Wilson, has been in post since 2003 and is due to retire in 2029.

Financial Capacity

All Saints operates an effective ministry on a shoestring, supported by some remaining historic assets. The PCC is working to increase income, footfall, and local engagement through increased use of the building and major events such as a Christmas Tree Festival. Advice from the Diocesan funding team is that our current level of activity does not justify grant aid to the extent which is needed, so our best hopes for major repairs rest on either a changed funding landscape or the receipt of a large legacy. Alternatively, the repairs will have to be carried out piecemeal as funds can be obtained. Historic England, the Major Churches Trust and the Church Buildings Council are aware of our circumstances.

An associated Friends charity, established in 2016, is currently dormant as new Trustees are sought.

An electronic donation point is due to be installed this summer.

Notwithstanding a financial situation which has felt fragile for many decades, and a building which at times demonstrates its pressing need for repair, the PCC has continued to maintain and develop All Saints, with significant repairs and enhancements completed during recent years.

Person Specification

[illegible]

