

# A LITTLE HISTORY OF SOUTHCHURCH

By Mike Penry

## Episode 24: THE NEW CHURCH

The obvious place to start with any account of alterations to church buildings is the granting of a faculty. (Faculty jurisdiction is still alive and well. If you want to know more, you obviously want to be a churchwarden and we'd be delighted to hear from you!) Fortunately, we still have the faculties relating to the building of the New Church. The style of the faculties is more ornate than the somewhat down-to-earth modern style, but - helpfully - also more descriptive.

### Extracts from the Faculty of April 1906

That there is a present need of additional accommodation at the Parish Church of Southchurch owing to the existing accommodation which is for about 170 only being insufficient for the needs of the Parishioners.

The Church from its position near the common boundary between the Parishes of Southchurch and Prittlewell (both within the Borough of Southend-on-Sea) also serves for a large population in the adjoining ecclesiastical district of All Saints within the Parish of Prittlewell. The Town Council's estimate of the population of the Parish of Southchurch alone in December 1905 was 2,895.

That at a meeting of the Parishioners of the said Parish in Vestry assembled on the 23rd day of February 1906 pursuant to public notice previously given according to law the following resolutions were agreed to:

- that the plans prepared by Mr J.N. Comper of West Norwood and submitted to this Meeting for the enlargement of the Parish Church of Southchurch be approved; and that the Rector and Churchwardens apply for the necessary faculty for the execution of the work,
- that in carrying out the proposed works it will be necessary to remove a portion of the north wall of the nave and chancel and to erect on the north portion of the churchyard lying between the existing Church and the highway a new building which will serve in future as nave and north aisle, the existing Church thereafter serving as a south aisle and morning chapel, the present Holy Table being removed to the east end of the new nave,
- that the accommodation in the Church will be increased to 370 sittings,
- that the estimated cost of the enlargement to be now made is £2,500 at least of which £1,777 and upwards has already been subscribed and received and a further sum of £377 promised, the said receipts and promises being independent of any contributions which may be made by the Incorporated or Diocesan or other Church Building Societies.

### Extracts from the Faculty of September 1912

That the plan of the Parish Church enlargement begun in the year 1906 requires to be completed by the addition of a chancel, part of the north aisle and the north porch.

That the accommodation of the said Church will be increased from 360 to 520 sittings.

That the estimated cost of the said works amounts to £3,000 which will be provided by donations.

The two faculties provide a useful summary of the proposed alterations and of progress in delivering them. Sir Ninian Comper clearly intended to build us an ornate Gothic Revival church, with a strong focus on the altar in the new chancel. The medieval church was to be retained as a south aisle, and a corresponding north aisle built in the north-eastern corner of the new church. The main entrance was to be through a new north porch.

Clearly we (or Sir Ninian?) were overambitious. While the 1906 faculty is optimistic about raising the necessary funds, the 1912 faculty says the amounts “will be provided by donations”. We now know that the chancel was not built for another 20 years, that the north aisle has not been completed (yet!), and that we are still coming in through the Romanesque south doorway.

I will explain what Comper wanted to build in more detail in subsequent episodes; and, after that, I suggest we vote on which church you prefer: the one which Comper and Eden planned, or the one with which we have ended up.

**Come back in a couple of weeks’ time for Episode 25: “SIR JOHN BETJEMAN’S VIEWS ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE”**

- What did Sir John Betjeman have to say about the style in which our church was built?
  - What are the chasuble, amice, alb and maniple?

**See all Episodes of ‘A Little History of Southchurch’ [here](#)**