St Saviour's at Holy Trinity – an Anglican church once more for Lyttelton

There's an element of coming home in this story of restoration. A familiar sight since its consecration in 1860, the Church of the Most Holy Trinity was the place of worship for Lyttelton's Anglican community until it was badly damaged in the earthquakes of 2010/2011. Happily, just 'over the hill', St Saviour's, the church that once was part of Lyttelton but had moved to be the chapel for Cathedral Grammar School in the city, was available to be brought back.

The foundation for the new church was laid on 18 August 2013 by Bishop Victoria Matthews. The St Saviour's building was cut into ten pieces, and in September 2013 moved, through Gebbies Pass, to its new home on the Winchester Street site where the Church of the Most Holy Trinity Anglican Church formerly stood. The building was gradually restored over the following months.

Renamed St Saviour's at Holy Trinity, it was consecrated by Bishop Victoria Matthews on 7 June 2015. Here is the story of its evolution.

Church of the Most Holy Trinity, Lyttelton

The second Church of the Most Holy Trinity Church, Lyttelton, undated. Lyttelton Museum.

A permanent church building was a high priority for Lyttelton's first Anglican residents, and the foundation stone for the first Church of the Most Holy Trinity was laid on 24 April 1852 by the founder of the Canterbury settlement, John Robert Godley, Esq. Designed by architect Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort and built by Isaac Luck, it opened on 6 January 1853. An all-wood building was not considered permanent enough for a church, but stone was too expensive and an earthquake risk, so the church was constructed of rimu and totara wood framing and Lyttelton-made brick infill. Unfortunately the timber used was green and as it dried the building joints shrank and became very loose, causing the church to move in high winds. The Lyttelton Times noted that during services 'the congregation used to assemble in terror, and on some occasions it was evident that but little was wanting to make them all rush out in a body.' The building was abandoned after about 9 months, and eventually demolished in 1857.

In 1857, a committee formed to oversee a replacement church. The second church was nearly built in wood because there wasn't the money to do otherwise. However, a grant from the Provincial Council allowed the preferred Early English Gothic Revival design in stone by architect George Mallinson to proceed. Bishop Henry James Chitty Harper (the first Bishop of Christchurch) laid the foundation stone on 20 June 1859, and consecrated the new church the following year on 10 April. Built by Edward Morey of red volcanic stone from the hills near Lyttelton and sandstone from Quail Island, it was the first stone Anglican church built in Canterbury. It incorporated steel and timber, including some from the previous church. The interior featured plaster stucco and stained matai, with totara and pine seats.

A century and a half later, the church was badly damaged in the September 2010 earthquake, and some walls partially collapsed during the February 2011 earthquake. It completely collapsed in the June 2011 earthquake, although luckily that was just after its remaining stained glass windows were retrieved. The remains of the building were demolished later that year.

The Anglican Church Property Trustees decided that Cathedral Grammar School's chapel, originally St Saviour's Church in West Lyttelton, would find a new home back in Lyttelton.

St Saviour's Church, West Lyttelton

St Saviour's Church (bottom left) in West Lyttelton, c.a. 1911. Lyttelton Museum.

For several years the first Bishop of Christchurch, Henry John Chitty Harper, worked towards providing pastoral care and a place of worship for Lyttelton's visiting seamen. St Saviour's Church was the result of his efforts, enabled by an endowment left by Lyttelton's first vicar (later archdeacon), Benjamin Woolley Dudley, for the purpose of a West Lyttelton church.

The church was designed by architect Cyril Mountfort, son of Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort, who designed Lyttelton's first Church of the Most Holy Trinity. Messrs Sutton and Weastall, the local undertakers and builders, constructed the building in pieces and then assembled it on site at the corner of Brittan Terrace and Simeon Quay. The exterior was board-and-batten with a corrugated iron roof, and the interior was in plaster, with rimu and totara timber. The Star described it at the time of opening as lofty, well ventilated, and excellently lit by stained glass windows, and having very good acoustic properties. The original design allowed for a nave and steeple to be added later, but these were never needed.

St Saviour's was consecrated on 29 October 1885 by Bishop Harper. Rev. Edward Elliot Chambers was vicar from this time until his death in 1921, and the church's stained glass window, 'Christ Calming the Waters', was commissioned by his parishioners as a memorial to him. The church continued its close relationship with visiting seamen, and had a plaque commemorating its association with Captain Robert Falcon Scott and the crews of RRS *Discovery* and the SS *Terra Nova.*

Following the rearrangement of Lyttelton Harbour's parishes in 1975, the church was no longer required and a new home was found for it at as the chapel at Cathedral Grammar School in Christchurch. The building was dismantled into eight pieces, relocated over Evans Pass, and reassembled at the school on the corner of Park Terrace and Chester St West in January 1976. The Lyttelton site was retained by the Anglican Church and used for social housing.

The building was only slightly damaged in the 2010-2011 earthquakes, but it had become too small for Cathedral Grammar's requirements. The perfect solution was to return the church to the Parish of Lyttelton.

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