

# ENGLISH HERITAGE REVIEW OF DIOCESAN CHURCHES 2005 (EXTRACT)

## Our Lady of Consolation & St Francis, West Grinstead

Park Lane, West Grinstead, West Sussex RH13 8LT



### HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH

ARCHITECT (S) & DATE (S): John A Crawley 1876, Frederick A Walters 1896, Riley & Glanfield 1964

LISTED STATUS: not listed

IN CONSERVATION AREA: No

LIST DESCRIPTION: N/A

POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS/ADDITIONS TO LIST DESCRIPTION AND/OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION; N/A

## HISTORY AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CHURCH IF NOT LISTED:

Catholic worship continued at West Grinstead after the Reformation, kept alive by the Caryll family of West Grinstead Park. The Priests' House (listed) contains a chapel in an upper room believed to have been used throughout the period when Roman Catholicism was outlawed. The Priest's House was endowed as a presbytery in 1671. As a shrine in honour of Our Lady, West Grinstead was established before the Reformation. This explains why the present church is of such size and quality in a rural location. A Frenchman, Father Jean-Marie Denis, was appointed in 1863 (he died in 1900) and the Bishop of Southwark asked him to erect 'a miniature French cathedral'. What was built is not quite that but is nonetheless ambitious for a small rural parish and shrine. Tall nave, with aisles, and sanctuary, and southwest tower. A south transept was never built. All in flint with ashlar dressings and in the Gothic style of around 1300. Only the tower looks more 'free' with its three-light bell-openings and the outline of its top and the small fleche. Inside the entire church is stone rib-vaulted and of unexpected quality. Oversized heraldic shields, carved in stone and painted, are at the springing point of the nave arcades, bearing the arms of the benefactors of the parish and shrine. The foundation stone was laid on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1875 and the church was opened on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1876. This comprised the nave and aisles only and was designed by John Crawley (cf Sacred Heart Hove). The aisles were to be raised later. The building was in the Early Decorated style, and the nave was stone vaulted. Of the original plan transepts, nuns' choir, tower and spire had not been realised. The aisles were raised and the sanctuary, chapels to either side of the sanctuary and a bell turret were added in 1896 by F A Walters. The church was re-opened on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1896. It is not clear when the tower was begun but the upper parts were built in 1964, to designs by Messrs Riley & Glanfield. It looks rather 1914 than 1964. Riley & Glanfield (now John Glanfield & Partners) specialise in church work and their alterations are often very discreet. They also added the short spire. The completion of the tower was in memory of Hilaire Belloc, who died in 1953 and is buried here.

## SOURCES

Parish priest

Margaret Clifton & Rev David Goddard *The Catholic Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation & St Francis, West Grinstead – A short History*

D Robert Elleray *Sussex Places of Worship* 2004

*Building News* 4<sup>th</sup> June 1875, p644; *Building News* 7<sup>th</sup> July 1876, p21; *The Builder* 19<sup>th</sup> August 1876, p819; *The Tablet* 18<sup>th</sup> July 1896, p104;

## STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Architecturally the building is a fairly typical late Victorian Catholic Church executed to a high standard if a little harsh and mechanical externally. John A Crawley may have designed the whole building in 1876. He died in 1881. The interior is impressive with its complete stone vaulting. Combined with the historic interest of the site the church is probably listable Grade 2.

