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Syriac Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom



St Thomas the Apostle Cathedral
London

St Thomas Cathedral



HM Queen Elizabeth II
Queen of the United Kingdom



HH Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East



HRH Prince Charles
Prince of Wales



HE Archbishop Athanasius Toma
Syriac Orthodox Archbishop in the UK

St Thomas Cathedral



St Thomas Cathedral (previous)



St Thomas Cathedral (present)

History of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom

The Syriac Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom (SOC-UK) is a Patriarchate Vicariate of the Syriac Orthodox Church that is headed by the His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, the Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church. SOC-UK has its main site at St Thomas Cathedral in London, where the Archbishop H.E. Mor Athanasius Toma Dawod Dakkama resides.



His Holiness Patriarch Aphrem II
with His Eminence Archbishop Athanasius Toma
Following the Election of His Holiness as Patriarch of the Church

The Syriac Orthodox Church is an autocephalous Oriental Orthodox church based in “Beth Nahreen” (Mesopotamia) in the Middle East and all the surrounding regions. Its members are spread throughout the world. It employs the Liturgy of St. James the Apostle, the oldest surviving liturgy in Christianity, and uses Syriac as its official and liturgical language. The church is led by the Syriac Patriarch of Antioch. The Syriac Orthodox Church traces its history to one of the first Christian communities in Antioch, described in the New Testament (Acts of the Apostles 11:26) and established the first church outside Jerusalem by the Apostle St. Peter in 37AD who is the first Patriarch of the church.

St Thomas Cathedral

The link between the Syriac Orthodox Church and Western Europe dates back to second half of the 19th century during the time of the late Patriarch HH Ignatius Peter IV.

However, the nucleus of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom had started in the early 1960s. During its early years, the spiritual needs of the Syriac Orthodox Church community in the UK were served by visiting Bishops and Priests in the following order:

- Fr. Abd-Al-Ahad Shabo (currently HE Mor Julius Abd Al-Ahad Shabo Metropolitan of Sweden and Scandinavia).
- HE Mor Timothius Aphrem Aboodi (former Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Canada, now retired) (1985 - 1991).
- Rev Fr. Abd-Al-Ahad Zaytoun (1991 - 1992).
- Rev. Fr. Aphrem Karim (currently HH Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II the Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church) (1992 - 1994).
- Rev. Fr Toma Dawod (currently HE Mor Athanasius Toma Dawod , the Archbishop of SOC-UK) (1994 - to-date).

For a number of years, SOC-UK used various church buildings belonging to sisterly churches within London while the number of the Syriac Orthodox congregation was small. As the number of the parishioners started to increase, especially after 1990, the late Patriarch HH Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas had asked Archbishop Athanasius Toma and the newly appointed church administrators to start the task of acquiring or building the first own Syriac Orthodox Church in the UK. The effort of the Archbishop and the team were culminated by the grand opening of the newly constructed St Thomas Cathedral in Acton, West London, thus becoming the first Syriac Orthodox Church building in the UK.

SOC-UK has several parishes across the United Kingdom to serve its parishioners who are spread all over the UK. The main concentration is in and around London as well as Brighton, Cardiff, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Southampton.

The spiritual needs of SOC-UK are served by Archbishop Athanasius Toma who is assisted by Rev Fr Rabban Afram Ozan, Rev Fr Ishak Tuza, and Emeritus Corepiscopos Fr Dr Yousif Bana.

Furthermore, along with the Archbishop and the clergy, the church maintained and run by the board of trustees and the administration committee with the help of the other committees.

St Thomas Cathedral

The joint efforts of the Archbishop and the board of trustees resulted in the purchase of land and culminated by the building St Thomas Cathedral centre in 2010 comprising the church, hall and bishop residence. The church was opened and consecrated on 3rd July 2010 in the name of the Apostle St. Thomas.



Syriac Centre (St Thomas Cathedral previously)



H.E. Athanasius Toma Giving a Sermon on Sunday
at St Thomas Cathedral

St Thomas Cathedral

The consecration ceremony was officiated by the blessed memory His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. He was assisted by His Eminence Mor Athanasius Toma Dakkama and several Syriac Orthodox Archbishops from all over the world. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries and representatives from the various churches in the UK as well as the Syriac people in the UK and those who attended from our churches all over the world.



H.H. of Blessed Memory Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas
with H.E. Mor Athanasius Toma the Syriac Archbishop in the UK
During the Opening and Consecration of St Thomas Cathedral
on Saturday 3rd July 2010.

St Thomas Cathedral



H.H. of Blessed Memory Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas
with H.E. Mor Athanasius Toma the Syriac Archbishop in the UK
During the Consecration of St Thomas Cathedral in July 2010.



H.H. of Blessed Memory Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas
with H.E. Mor Athanasius Toma Dakkama the Syriac Archbishop in the
UK and some members of the Church Administration Council

**His Eminence Mor Athanasius Toma Dawod Dakkama
Archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom**



He was born in Mosul, Iraq in 1967 to the faithful family of Dakkama.

He had studied in Mosul's schools and obtained a secondary school baccalaureate in 1984.

He went to study theology at St Aphrem's College in Damascus, Syria in 1984 and graduated with a Bachelor degree in 1989.

He was ordained as a Monk in 1990 by H.E. Mor Gregorius Saliba Shamon the Patriarchal Advisor and Emeritus Archbishop of Mosul, Kirkuk and Kurdistan. The ordination took place in St Aphrem Cathedral, the largest in Mosul. Unfortunately in 2014 it was captured by Daesh and its Christian symbols were destroyed and then converted into a mosque.

Afterwards, he served in various churches and monasteries in Iraq, Jerusalem and Syria.

St Thomas Cathedral

He was appointed by the patriarch H.H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas in 1994 as a monk priest in London to serve the Syriac community and immigrants from the Middle East. Since that date, Fr. Toma Dakkama worked tirelessly to bring the community together with the aim to establish a centre to be the focal point in order to preserve the Syriac liturgy, culture, heritage and the Syriac language spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Patriarch had appointed him as a Patriarchal Vicar in the United Kingdom in 2005. This coincided with the elevation of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the UK to be a Patriarchal Vicariate further to the growth in the number of parishioners.

He was consecrated as a bishop with the name Mor Athanasius Toma Dakkama on 3rd December 2006 by the patriarch. The consecration had taken place in a moving ceremony officiated by H.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas assisted by several Archbishops and bishops from the Syrian Orthodox Church and other churches at St. Peter and St. Paul Cathedral at the Syriac Orthodox Monastery in Ma'arat Sydnaya in Syria.



H.H. Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas Ordaining H.E. Athanasius Toma Dawod
Assisted by several Archbishops of the Syriac Orthodox Church
at St Peter and St Paul Cathedral in Ma'arat Sadinayah.

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He was installed on Sunday 10th December 2014t in London as the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop in the United Kingdom in a ceremony officiated by H.E. Mor Selwanus Al-Ni'meh the Archbishop of Homms and Hamah, Syria. Officials and representatives from various churches in the UK had attended the ceremony along with the Syriac Orthodox parishioner and other Christians from the Middle East.



The Installation of HE Athanasius Toma Dawod as the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop in the UK in a Mass officiated by HE Selwanus El-Nemeh Archbishop of Homms and Hama

Who had read the Patriarchal Bull Regarding the Appointment

He is a member of the Holy Synod of the Syriac Orthodox Church and had participated in all its meeting since he became a bishop.

He has achieved the major task of establishing the first Syriac Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom. This was culminated by the building of the church centre in London comprising the church, hall and bishop residence. The church was opened and consecrated on 3rd July 2010 in the name of the Apostle St. Thomas. The consecration ceremony was officiated by the patriarch H.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. He was assisted by H.E. Mor Athanasius Toma Dakkama and several Syrian Orthodox Archbishops from all over the world. The ceremony was attended by various dignitaries and representatives from the various churches in the United Kingdom.

He became a member of the Syriac Orthodox Holy Synod.

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He was awarded the honour and dignity of Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Francis I by HRH Prince Carlo of Bourbon Two Sicilies, Duke of Castro and Prince and Grand Master of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St George. The Royal Investiture had taken place at Westminster Cathedral in London on Friday 21st October 2011.



St Thomas Cathedral

He had welcomed HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales and his guest HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan on his first visit to the Syriac Orthodox Cathedral in London on Tuesday 17th December 2013. He then attended the Advent reception at Clarence house where HRH the Prince of Wales spoke about the Christian in the Middle East.



HE Athanasius Toma Presenting HRH Prince Charles with a Syriac Bible as a Gift During his First Visit to St Thomas Cathedral

St Thomas Cathedral

He had participated in all the funeral arrangements of the Thriced Blessed H.H. Patriarch Zakka I Iwas until his final resting place on 21st March 2014 at St Aphrem Monastery, Maarat Saydnaya, Syria.



He had participated in the election of the new patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II on Monday 31st March 2014 at St Jacob Baradeus Monastery, Lebanon.



St Thomas Cathedral

He had met His Holiness Pope Francis the Head of the Roman Catholic Church during a church visit to the Vatican on Wednesday 7th May 2014. H.H. the Pope had asked H.E. to pass his blessings and prayers to the parishioners of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the UK.



He had participated in the installation ceremony of the new patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church H.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II on Thursday 29th May 2014 at St Peter and St Paul Cathedral, St Aphrem Monastery, Maarat Saydnaya, Damascus, Syria and attended the Holy Synod of church afterwards.



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He had welcomed HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales during his second visit to the Syriac Orthodox Cathedral in London on Wednesday 17th December 2014. During the visit, HRH the Prince of Wales met refugees from Iraq and Syria and then spoke about the suffering of Christians in the Middle East.



HE Athanasius Toma Welcoming HRH Prince Charles
During his Second Visit to St Thomas Cathedral

He had attended all Church's Holy Synod meetings since he was installed as a bishop in 2006.

He celebrates the Holy Mass in many cities within the UK helping to fulfil the spiritual needs of the scattered Syriac Orthodox parishioners and those from other denominations from across the Middle East.

He is working hard to keep the younger generation within the church and strengthen their Christian's believe. There is a regular Sunday school to teach prayers and hymns to the children.

He has participated in various religious and political conferences in which he was always defending the Christian people in the Middle East and calling for an end to the killing and discrimination.

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He maintains a brotherly and fraternal relations with the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and all the other Oriental and Eastern Christian Dominations within the Ecumenical spirit with the aim to work together to spread the Christian faith, help the needy and the poor and defend them, sow the seeds of love and call for peace in the world. He is represents the Syriac Orthodox Church in UK within the:

- Council of Oriental Orthodox Churches in the UK (COOC)
- Anglican - Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum (AOORF)
- Catholic - Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum (COORF)

He has a good relationship with the Muslim groups in the UK. He attends their ceremonies and they also attend some church services. He joins them in meetings to discuss ways to reach common grounds and the best ways to establish peace.

Also, he speaks Syriac, Arabic and English and has written a book and various religious articles. He has given interviews to various TV and radio channels during which he has spoken about the suffering of the Christians in the Middle East and defended their rights.

He has worked hard with the church's board of trustees to raise funds to purchase the adjacent St Saviour's Church and then renovating it accommodate the expanding church congregation. The church will become the new St Thomas Cathedral and it will be opened and consecrated on Thursday 24th November 2016 by H.H. Aphrem II the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and the Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, HRH Prince Charles the Prince of Wales, and H.E. Athanasius Toma Dawod Dakkama.

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H.E. Athanasius Toma Giving a Sermon at:



Old St Thomas Cathedral



New St Thomas Cathedral

The History of St Saviour's Church



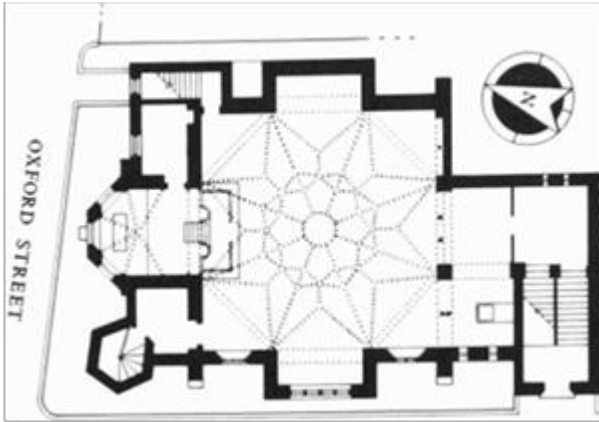
St Saviour's Church (formerly)



St Thomas Cathedral (present)

The History of St Saviour's Church

St Saviour's was one of the first Churches to be built for the Deaf Community in England. It opened in 1875, on a site on Oxford Street. This site was leased to the Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD) (then known as The Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb) for 60 years by the Duke of Westminster. Rev Samuel Smith was the first priest to serve there.



Layout Map of St Saviour's Church, Oxford Street

The original foundation stone of St Saviour's Church, Oxford Street, was laid by Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (then HM King Edward VII) on 5th July 1870.



The stone is now at St Saviour's Church, Acton.



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Due to the closeness of the lease expiry, the Oxford Street site was surrendered in 1922. It is now a sports shop opposite Selfridges.

A new site was found in Acton and a new St Saviour's was built.

The foundation stone was laid by HRH Edward, Prince of Wales (then HM King Edward VIII) on 22nd April 1924 (Edward was the eldest son of HM King George V and HM Queen Mary).



RAD commissioned the famous architect Sir Edward Brantwood Maufe to design the new St Saviour's church for the deaf in Acton having finished St Bede's church for the deaf in Clapham in 1922.

The construction work was undertaken by Holloway Brothers. In early 1924 at a cost of £16,500 and was completed within a year.



The opening ceremony was performed on 5th May 1925 by Princess Mary, the Princess Royal and Countess of Harewood (1897 - 1965), third child and only daughter of King George V

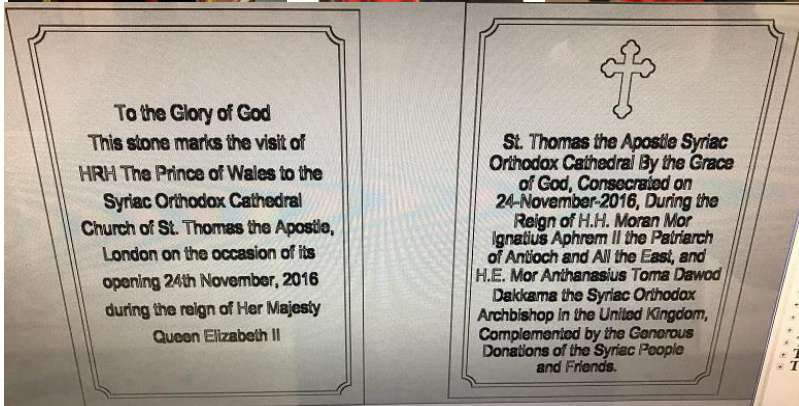
The Opening of the New St Thomas Cathedral

In 2014 RAD decided to sell St Saviour's. As it is located next door to the Syriac Orthodox Church in London and due to the increasing number of Syriac parishioners, it was decided by the church administration council to buy the St Saviour's Church.

The purchase was completed on 26th March 2015. After lengthy wait for approval by planning approvals from English Heritage and Ealing Borough Council, the renovation work started in May 2016. The renovation work was completed within five months.

The renovated church building was rebranded as St Thomas Cathedral for the use of the Syriac Orthodox people in the United Kingdom.

On Thursday 24th November 2016; HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales with HH Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II and HE Archbishop Athanasius Toma; attended the opening ceremony and unveiled the plaques to commemorate the happy occasion.



St Thomas Cathedral

The Architect

Sir Edward Brantwood Maufe was the leading church architect of the 20th century. He also liked Swedish contemporary architecture.



He had designed numerous famous buildings of which four churches are shown below.



St Bede's Church, Clapham



St Saviour's Church, Acton



St Thomas Church, Ealing



Guildford Cathedral

The Church Building Architecture History

The church building displays Maufe's characteristic pared-down Gothic manner, influenced by contemporary Scandinavian church design (e.g. Ivar Tengbom's Högalidskyrkan in Stockholm), and having strong affinities with contemporary British work by Charles Holden, Giles Gilbert Scott and others.



Links with Mesopotamia

The institute building forms a low podium, with simple mullion-and-transom windows, flat roofs and stepped, **Ziggurat-like** massing - particularly emphatic around the main east doorway on Old Oak Road.



The Ziggurat of Ur and Eridu in Mesopotamia

This, like the side entrance on Armstrong Road to the north, is a segmental brick arch with splayed sides and sturdy oak doors. To one side is the foundation stone, dated 22nd April 1924; the building's rainwater-heads bear the completion date of 1925 along with the RADD monogram.

St Thomas Cathedral

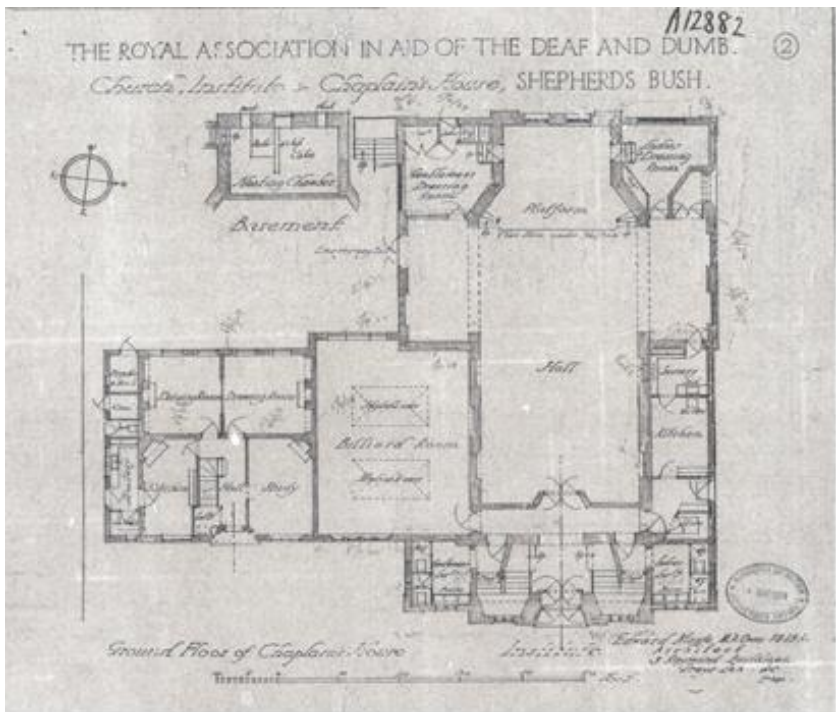
Rising from the podium is the sheer rectangular mass of the church. Its east front, behind and above the main entrance, has a tall four-light window with reticulated Gothic tracery of stylised form, framed by shallow pilaster-buttresses and a low-pitched gable. The flank walls are of sheer brick, with slender two-light windows. Transept-like projections, taller than the institute but lower than the church, contain the Lady chapel and vestry. Canted walls mark the transition to the narrower chancel, whose blind end wall features a simple cross in relief.

Part of England's History

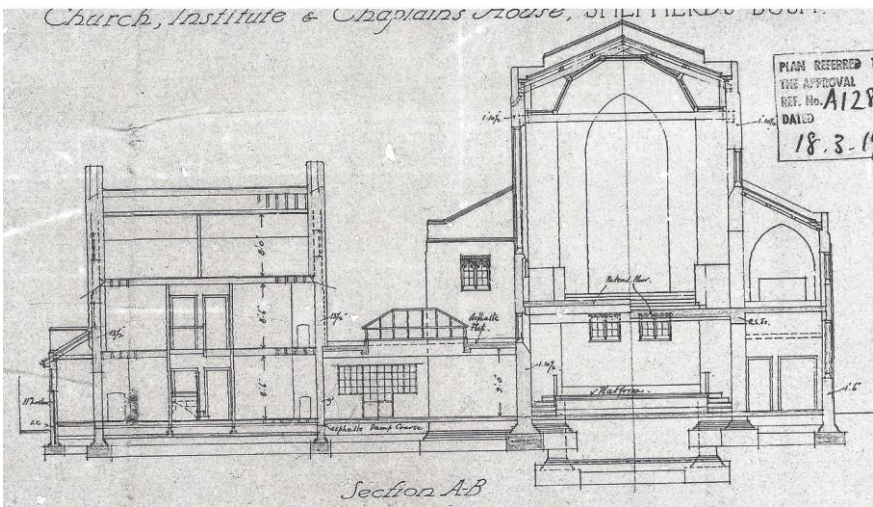
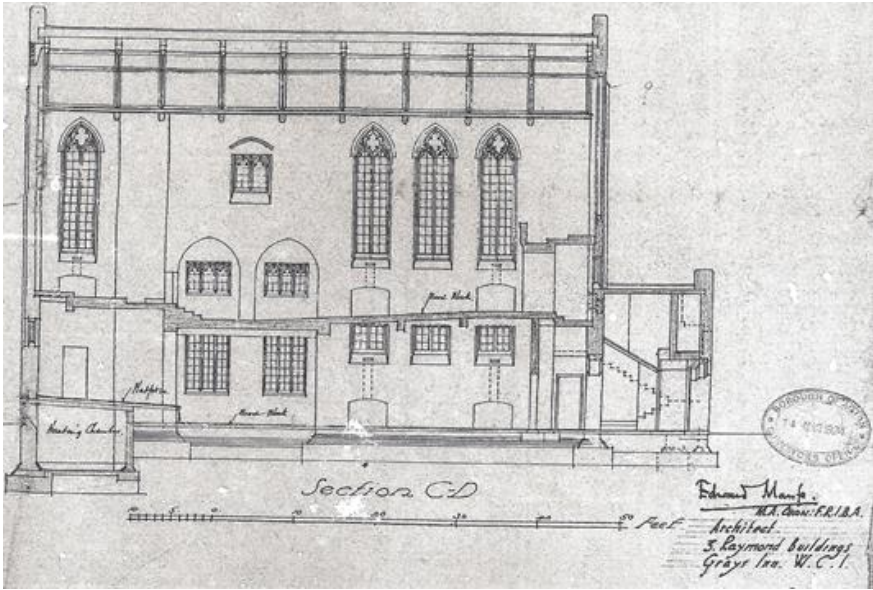
On 13th Nov 2014 the building of St Saviour's Church was listed as a Grade II Listed Historic Buildings of special interest.

Sample of the Building's Historic Drawings

The following drawings by the church architect Sir Edward Maufe.



St Thomas Cathedral



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The Church Interior

Its design reflects design principle that is visual rather than auditory. The internal walls are of whitewashed brick. Above is a polygonal wagon roof, painted deep blue with wave motifs picked out in gold on the trusses. Above the entrance is a gallery for overflow accommodation and projection apparatus.



The marble font was brought from the former St Saviour's Church in Oxford Street.

The lighting is in the shape of a golden sun. Each light has the inscription **JHS**, abbreviation for "Jesus Hominum Salvator", which is translated to "Jesus Saviour of Men".

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The Doors

The doors are covered with studded blue leather and have little cross-in-oval widows.



Above the door the phrase “VENITE EXULTEMUS DOMINO” is written, which is taken from Psalm 95 and translated into “Come, let us sing unto the Lord”.



Stained Glass Windows

These usually tell a story or portray a scene of faith, and as the light shines through, the colours and light speak their own message to us

The East window has figures of saints with angels above and scenes of the Crucifixion, Annunciation and Resurrection below.



Art Work



Painting of the Last Supper by Frank Maguire



Sculpture of the Good Shepherd
by Joseph Gawen



Bust of Prince Edward
by Joseph Gawen

Protected Listed Features



Retain and protect the main doorway from Old Oak Road



Retain existing iron radiators on the first floor and reutilise them on the ground floor



Retain and protect the first floor level

Retain two stone heads from the Oxford Street Church



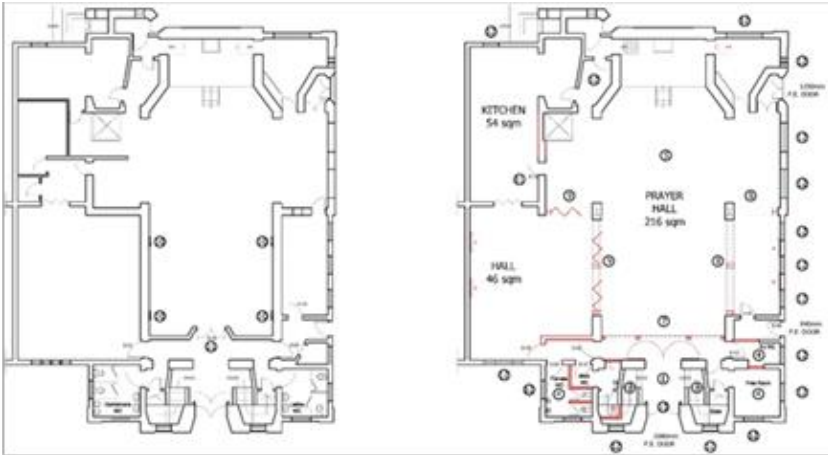
Retain and protect the feature twin stairs and the iron gate



The building rainwater heads bear the completion date of 1925 along with the RADD monogram

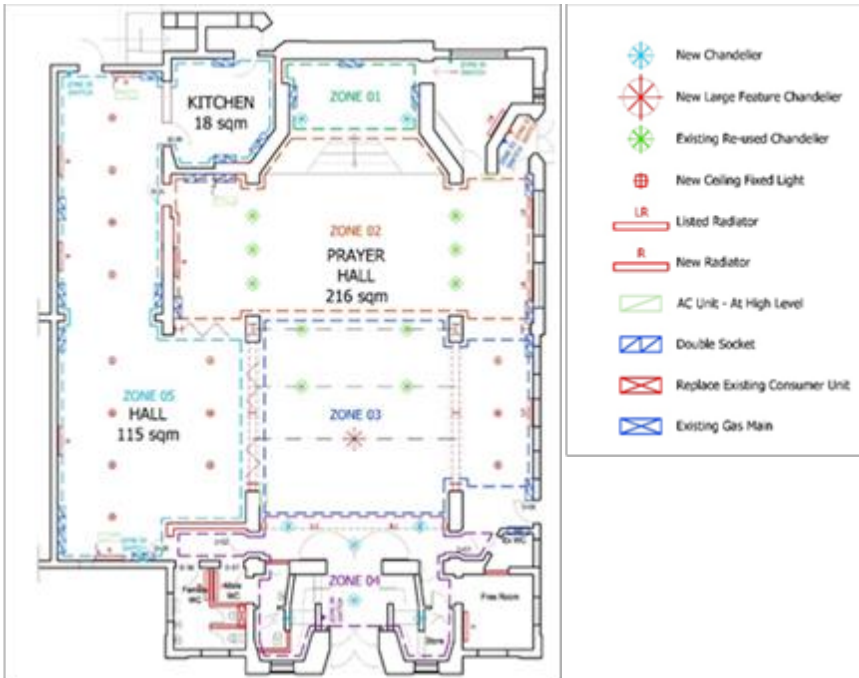


Refurbishment work of the ground floor



Existing

Proposed (Completed)



St Thomas Cathedral

Refurbishment work of the ground floor - Steel Work



Completion of the Renovation of St Thomas Cathedral



Looking from the Altar towards the Main Door



Mass to Celebrate the completion of the Church Renovations

Details about the Syriac (Syrian) Orthodox Church

- What is the Syriac Orthodox Church? Where does it trace its origins to?

The Syriac (Syrian) Orthodox Church of Antioch is an autocephalous Oriental Orthodox Church originated and based in "Beth Nahreen" (Mesopotamia) in the Middle East and all the surrounding regions. However, its members nowadays are spread throughout the world.

It employs the Liturgy of St. James the Apostle, the oldest surviving liturgy in Christianity and uses Syriac/Aramaic, the language spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ, as its official and liturgical language. Many people still speak Syriac nowadays and are proud of it.

The Syriac Orthodox Church (SOC) of Antioch is the most ancient Christian church in the world. It traces its history to one of the first Christian communities, described in the Acts of the Apostles "The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch," (New Testament, Acts 11:26). St. Peter the Apostle is regarded as the founder of the see of Antioch in 36-37AD. The church in Antioch is regarded as the first church in Christendom after the church in Jerusalem. Therefore, St Peter is considered as the first Patriarch of the church. The current Patriarch of the church, the 122nd in the series of Patriarchs, is His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, the Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church.

The Syriac Orthodox Church had comprised the Arameans, descendant from the ancient Sumerians and Akkadians, Chaldeans and Assyrians, converted Jews, Arabs, Greek and Romans who inhabited "Beth Nahreen" (Mesopotamia). When they became Christians, they were called "Syrians" (Syriacs) and in reference to the message of the Gospel that came from the Greater Syria, Israel/Palestine and Mesopotamia at the time with Antioch as its capital. The Syrian (Syriac) name became synonymous with Christians and their language and that of the church is Syriac (dialect of Aramaic). Consequently, the Aramean became synonymous with the non-believers. However, some Christian dominations have started to label themselves with the names of the ancient civilisations of that region.

The spiritual care of the Church was vested in the Bishop of Antioch from the earliest years of Christianity. Given the antiquity of the Patriarchate of Antioch and the importance of the Church in the city of

St Thomas Cathedral

Antioch, which was a commercially significant city and capital in the eastern parts of the Roman Empire, the first council of Nicaea (325AD) recognised the bishopric as a Patriarchate along with the Bishoprics of Rome, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, bestowing authority for the Church of Antioch and All of the East on the Patriarch. Its jurisdiction covered the whole of the Middle East, Asia Minor, India and all the way to China and possibly Japan.

The Church of Antioch played a prominent role in the first three Church Synod Councils held at Nicaea (325AD), Constantinople (381AD), and Ephesus (431AD), shaping the formulation and early interpretation of Christian doctrines. The Church belongs to the Oriental Orthodox family of churches, which has been a distinct church body since the Council of Chalcedon (451AD) which SOC rejects.

The Syriac Orthodox Church believes in; one God and the Trinity; the immaculate conception from the Virgin Mary; the crucifixion, resurrection, sacrifice, the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Church believes in one nature - the Logos Incarnate, of the full humanity and full divinity; one composite person of the Lord Jesus, and one composite nature that consist of two natures: divine and human, which cannot be mixed, separated or transformed.

Also, it accepts the Holy Bible, both the old and new testaments and the teachings of the Apostles and it is part of the Apostolic and traditional church. As a consequence, Mary is "the mother of God", and the phrase "Thou who was crucified for us" stands true in the Trisagion which is directed to the second person, i.e., Christ.

- How long has the church been going?

The Syriac Orthodox Church was established circa 2000 ago as it traces its roots to the dawn of Christianity (36-37AD) (also see earlier). It was subject to various prosecutions and encountered numerous divisions but it still exists today. Its continuous existence is not short of a miracle.

- What countries did the original Syria cover?

The original Syria (Levant) covered the region east of the Mediterranean, West of the Euphrates, north of the Arabian Desert and south of the Taurus Mountains in some places.

However, the Syriac Orthodox Church covered all the region of the

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Middle East to the East of the Mediterranean, Asia Minor, India and all the way to China and Japan. SOC still covers most of those areas today.

- Who heads the Syriac Orthodox Church worldwide? What is the name of the Patriarch?

He is His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, the Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church. He is the 122nd Patriarch of Antioch with St Peter being the first Patriarch to the Holy and Apostolic See of Antioch. He was installed to the see of St Peter on Ascension Day 29th May 2014 in Damascus. He was elected by the Church Holy Synod following the departure of the late Patriarch H.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas.

The Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate is currently based in Damascus after several transfers from its original see in Antioch throughout its history.

H.H. the Patriarch is assisted by the Catholicos His Beatitude Mor Baselios Thomas I the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church in India and many archbishops & bishops of the church worldwide who are members of the Church's Holy Synod.

- How big is the Syriac Orthodox Community in Iraq and other Middle-Eastern nations?

The followers of the Syriac Orthodox Church worldwide are over 5,000,000.

There are about 500,000 in Syria, 100,000 in Iraq, 50,000 in Lebanon, 30,000 in Turkey, 10,000 in the Holy Land (Israel and Palestine) and Jordan, and few thousands in Egypt and the Arabian Gulf States. However, the number in both Iraq and Syria is getting reduced by the weeks and mainly after the ISIS attack on the Christians and other minorities where people are escaping on a daily basis due to the increased intolerance and lack of peace and security. Furthermore there are more than 3,000,000 living in India.

Following the persecution and massacres of the Christians by the Ottomans (known as the Saifo) in the early 20th century, in which over half a million Syriac people were massacred along with the 1.5-2 million massacred Armenians, many of the church followers started to immigrate. They are now found across Europe (about 350,000), North and South America, Australia and New Zealand (about 300,000) as well as the

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addition of Guatemala and Central America (about 800,000).

- How big is the Syriac Orthodox Community in the United Kingdom?

There are about 3000 people belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church in the UK. There are two main parishes in London with a smaller parish in Brighton. Also, there are scattered communities around main cities such as Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff, Newcastle, Glasgow and Southampton. There are about 2000 parishioners living in London and its surroundings.

- What countries does the community in the UK come from?

The Syriac Orthodox community come from the Middle East with the majority from Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Palestine.

- Did they emigrate recently?

The church was established in the 1960s by the few immigrants and those who were pursuing further studies. It expanded slightly in the 1970s through to the 1990s. However, the number of its followers has grown considerably after the war in 2003 and due to the suffering by the Christians from terrorism since then.

It is worth mentioning that prior to that, the late Patriarch H.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Peter IV visited the UK in 1873. He had met the late HM Queen Victoria who helped our Syriac Orthodox Church in India. Also, she donated two press machines to the Syriac Orthodox Church in Jerusalem and Mardin, Turkey. This is how the links were established between the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Anglican of England.

- Who heads the Syrian Orthodox Church in the UK?

The spiritual leader for the Syriac Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom is His Eminence Archbishop Mor Athanasius Toma Dawod who is the Patriarchal Vicar in the UK.

He was appointed as a parish priest to serve the community in the UK on 1st December 1994 by the late Patriarch H.H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas and became based in London. He was consecrated as a bishop on 3rd December 2006 by the late Patriarch H.H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas in Damascus. He was then installed as the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the UK on 10th December 2006 in London.

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H.E. Archbishop Athanasius Toma is currently assisted by three priests with cooperation from the church board of trustees and the church administration committee.

- What is the difference between Syriac and Syrian?

Syriac is a Christian dialect of Aramaic. It is spoken by the Christian originally from the Middle East, (further East later on) and (worldwide nowadays). There are two main dialects in Syriac, the Western Syriac and Eastern Syriac in relation to location with regard to the river Euphrates.

People who speak Syriac are called (Suryoye in Syriac) (Suryan in Arabic) (Syrian in English). However, the people of the current day Syria are called (Suriyon/Suriyat in Arabic) (Syrians in English).

In Syriac, Arabic and other languages there is a difference in the spelling and pronunciation between the word describing the Christian people speaking Syriac (covering the whole Middle East) and the word describing the citizens of the present day country Syria. However, in English it is difficult when using the word “Syrian” to distinguish between the name of Christian people and their church from the name of the citizens of Syria. This has led sometimes to confusion by some people who assumed the jurisdiction of the church is limited to the country Syria only contrary to the historical and real facts.

To avoid the confusion in the meaning of “Syrian” in English, the Holy Synod of the Syriac Orthodox Church in 2000 had decided to recommend using the name of church liturgical language “Syriac” to refer to the name of the church and its followers.

Therefore, the Syrian Orthodox Church (of Antioch) is now called the Syriac Orthodox Church. Its followers are the Syriac people. Its liturgical language is the Syriac (also spoken by some of its followers).

It is worth mentioning that some historians mention that the name of the country Syria was derived from the name of the Syriac (Syrian) people.

If you would like to learn more about the different meaning, the following Table may be of help.

St Thomas Cathedral

English	Syriac		Arabic	
	Pronounced in English	Syriac Script	Pronounced in English	Arabic Script
Christian People Church of Antioch and All the East				
Syrian (<i>s / m</i>)	Suryoyo (<i>s / m</i>)		Suryani (<i>s / m</i>)	سرياني
Syrian (<i>s / f</i>)	Suryoyto (<i>s / f</i>)		Suryaniya (<i>s / f</i>)	سريانية
Syrians (<i>p / m</i>)	Suryoye (<i>p / m</i>)		Suryan (<i>p / m</i>)	سريان
Syrians (<i>p / f</i>)	Suryoytho (<i>p / f</i>)		Suryaniyat (<i>p / f</i>)	سريانيات
Syrian Church	D-'itto Suryoyto (<i>f</i>)	ܩܢܝܫܬܐ ܣܘܪܝܝܬܐ	Kaneesa Suryaniya (<i>f</i>)	كنيسة سريانية
Syriac Language	Leshono Suryoyo (<i>m</i>)		Lugha Suryaniya (<i>f</i>)	لغة سريانية
Country				
Syria (<i>f</i>)	Suriya (<i>f</i>)		Suriya (<i>f</i>)	سورية
Citizen (of Syria)				
Syrian (<i>s / m</i>)	Suroyo (<i>s / m</i>)		Suri (<i>s / m</i>)	سوري
Syrian (<i>s / f</i>)	Suroyto (<i>s / f</i>)		Suriya (<i>s / f</i>)	سورية
Syrians (<i>p / m</i>)	Suroye (<i>p / m</i>)		Suriyon (<i>p / m</i>)	سوريون
Syrians (<i>p / f</i>)	Suroytho (<i>p / f</i>)		Suriyat (<i>p / f</i>)	سوريات

Syriac Orthodox Church

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