

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

LISTED BUILDING	Church of the Blessed Sacrament
Grade:-	II
Date of Notification:-	10.08.2007
National Grid Reference:-	258516 198621
O.S. 1:10,000 Sheet No.:-	
CADW Reference No.:-	87524
C & C of S Reference No.:-	LB:519

Notes:-

Location:-

Situated on the E side of Gorseinon on the S side of Alexandra Road.

History:-

Roman Catholic church of 1967, by Robert Robinson, architect, and one of the larger new churches of the 1960s in South Wales. Designed in partnership with the artist John Petts (1914-1991). The centralised plan became popular in the post-war period, and was seen as encouraging greater participation in the liturgy, a theme encouraged by the Liturgical Movement and stressed by the Second Vatican Council. The most notable example of this plan in Britain is the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral by Gibberd (1962-67). Perhaps closer to the Blessed Sacrament is the contemporary St Mary at Leyland, by Jerzy Faczyski.

The original centralised plan with the altar beneath the lantern proved unsuccessful, and the building was re-ordered with altar moved to the rear of the church. The original seating was replaced, the original altar replaced by that from the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament, the baldacchino removed, and the egg-shaped front removed to the porch. John Petts designed the statues of Christ and the 'Mater Amabilis', as well as stained glass in four of the bays of the building; the red glass in the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament; the blue glass in the bay where the font formerly stood, the yellow glass in the children's chapel, and the chiefly rose glass behind the Mater Amabilis.

Other glass, depicting scenes from the books of Genesis and Exodus is said to be by Paul Quail. The stained glass at the heads of the two stairways down to the church hall depicting the Passion of Christ and Life of the Virgin is more recent. The egg-shaped font by John Hopkins of Tewkesbury now stands in the porch of the church. The basement of the church provides the church hall (modernised and re-ordered). The church roof is said to have been originally felted.

Exterior:-

Roman Catholic church, rough-rendered brickwork on black brick basement, 14 sided in plan with each side gabled. Ridge and furrow 14 sided metal-clad roof, 14 sided glazed lantern with matching roof in miniature (the lantern windows and gables aligned over the valleys of the main roof) and welded steel openwork cross with red

painted centre disc. The roof gable verges slope outward from gully-ends over rainwater heads to overhang the wall sections. These are all (apart from the entrance section) pierced by Greek-cross shaped small windows in regular pattern of one at apex, and then alternate rows of two and three. The church entrance on the N side up steps from the pavement is to the upper level, the building being raised on a basement church hall entered from the car park below, but the line between floors is not marked externally. N porch is built out, with matching gabled roof, rendered side walls and full glazing with hardwood mullions and transoms. On the rear S side two of the walls, corresponding to chapels within, are projected with similar roof detail to porch.

Interior:-

Impressive single space dominated by serrated roof, banded with steel ribs on 14 steel posts, the ribs running up to 14 sided steel ring at base of lantern, whose roof is also ribbed and boarded. The posts are mostly linked by a white-painted broad beam and the gabled spaces between are mostly infilled with white plaster panels at this point or glazed. Two bays each side of the porch do not have the beam and are open to the cross-pierced outer walls. Three bays infilled behind the sanctuary screen the organ, and there is a statue of Christ on centre panel. Sanctuary is quadrant shaped and has timber panelled back screening a passage behind which has two small vestries. Bench seats against panelling and centre chair on step. Curving open-back pews in 4 blocks follow curve of sanctuary step.

Around the church from the sanctuary: the 2 bays each side are glazed above the beam and the first is open below to a chapel, the second glazed below with door to stairs to the basement, the next bay each side is infilled and has confessionals, the next 2 each side are open to the outer wall, and the final one contains the porch.

The glass in the small cross lights is to an overall colour scheme moving from yellow to red from left to right, and with animal and natural themes to the designs. From left chapel has overall yellow glass, next green-blue, the third is infilled, and the next 2 bays, open to the walls, have pink and blue, and pink and purple. Then the entrance bay is glazed below the beam, plastered above. The 2 open bays left on porch have glass to overall green, and then blue, then the bay with confessionals, then the steps to basement have glass to red, yellow and black theme and finally the last chapel has glass to a deep red. Statues of Christ and Our Lady by John Petts.

In porch is an extraordinary egg-shaped stone font, matt-finished with finely lettered incised inscription and cross. The top, flattened off, has 2 shallow bowls hollowed out and polished. The font stands on a rock-faced granite block.

Listed:-

Listed as an innovative church design which is a particularly articulate expression of Liturgical Movement principals, in its centralised planning and bold modernity, successfully integrating expressive, symbolic forms. A harmony of art and architecture is achieved, notably in the remarkable quality of the stained glass and fittings by John Petts.

Reference:-

J. Newman, Buildings of Wales: Glamorgan, 1995, pp 362-3.