

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Background

The early white settlers in the Buffalo City area established Christian church congregations at an early stage. While there was some competition between the different denominations, there are some remarkable examples of co-operation. The churches started the first schools in East London and King Williams Town for black and white children.

Buildings selected to illustrate this record

Anglican – St Peters (EL), St Johns (EL), Holy Trinity (KWT)

Presbyterian – St Georges (EL), St Andrews (KWT), Gonubie

Methodist – Trinity (EL), Ncera

Lutheran – St Andrews (EL), Brakfontein

Catholic - Immaculate Conception (EL)

NGK – EL

Muslim – Mosque (EL).

East London:

ST PETERS (Anglican)

Introduction

This is the oldest extant church in East London. The first congregation gathered together in 1857, shortly after the establishment of East London. The first settlement around the new port was on the West Bank. The first building was an imported pre-fabricated structure in wood and iron. The land was granted to the Bishop of Grahamstown in 1861, the building was completed in October 1862 and the first service held on 2 November 1862. The west wall was re-built in 1882 and the sanctuary added.

Description

This is a simple brick-plastered building. The interior is of interest with some of the memorial plaques. The oak rood screen was erected in memory of Mrs Munn, wife of the Port Captain. The house adjoining the church was the original manse and was built in the late 1860s, so the Norfolk pine in the garden probably dates to that time.

Location

High Street, West Bank.

Access

By permission of the Rector of St Johns.

Recommendations

This is a listed building and those responsible for it should be encouraged to care for it.

ST JOHNS THE EVANGELIST (Anglican)

Introduction

Following the siting of the railway terminus on the east bank of the Buffalo River, many of the West Bank residents, especially those involved in business, moved to the east bank, to

Panmure, as the new village was known. The growing population had more resources available, and so raised funds for a much more imposing church than St Peters.

The foundation stone was laid on 10 June 1878 by Dr C.J. Egan in the first Masonic ceremony in East London. The clergy present were Archdeacon Kitton, Rev Wyche and the Rev A. Maggs from St Lukes Mission. The first service was held 19 November 1880 and the church was consecrated by Bishop Merriman in 1881. The architects were Cordeaux and Walker. The foundation stone for the new aisle for the chapel of the Kaffrarian Rifles (now Buffalo Volunteer Rifles) was laid on 18 Oct 1902 with coins of the realm being placed under the stone. When the church was built it served a community, which resided in the vicinity. With the growth of the town, the residential area has moved away, so there is only a small congregation at present.

Description

The building is of stone in the neo-Gothic style.

Location

It is situated on the corner of Oxford and Church Streets.

Access

Permission must be obtained to go inside from the Rector, 043 722 8986; rectory -7227021

Recommendations

This is of interest as it was the 'Mother Church' of the Anglican community. Communication could be made with the Rector to plan visits.

ST GEORGES CHURCH, (Presbyterian)

Introduction

The first Presbyterian church congregation met on the West Bank in 1874 and St Andrews church was built in 1880. With the growth of East London in Panmure, small churches and halls were built in the Beach area, Cambridge, Southernwood and North End. A Lutheran Hall in Park Avenue was used, but the growing congregation raised money to build a large church. The foundation stone was laid on 6 Jan 1900 and a silver trowel was presented to Mrs James Georgeson, who performed the ceremony. (The trowel is now in the East London Museum). The original design incorporated a dome, but there was no builder in East London able to erect one and there were several collapses. The concept of a dome was abandoned and a pitched roof used. St Georges first opened its doors in 1902.

Description

The entrance has an impressive pediment and Doric columns.

Location

The building is situated obliquely between Oxford Street and Park Avenue.

Access

Entry by permission of the minister. 743 7060; manse; 735 3637

Recommendations

Contact to be made with the minister.

TRINITY CHURCH, (Methodist)

Introduction

The first Wesleyan Methodist congregation was on the West Bank, but with the move to the east bank, churches were built in the Quigney (1880) and in Buxton Street (1890). The larger and wealthier people moved north of the town centre and began raising funds for a more imposing church. The foundation stone was laid on 19 September 1903 by Rev N. Abraham. Coins and a local newspaper placed under the stone. The first service was held on 16 September 1904. The architect was W.B. Longford

Description

The church is built of brick and plastered. It is in the Early English Gothic style and has an imposing crocketed spire. Repairs were undertaken in 1976, when there appeared to be a danger of collapse. The magnificent organ is a source of pride for the congregation. It was purchased at considerable expense in 1902 and was extensively repaired in 1946 and 1961. There are memorial tablets to those lost in the first and second World Wars.

Location

Oxford Street.

Access

With permission from the minister. 722 8904

Recommendations

This a well maintained church and contributes to the city's skyline.:

ST ANDREWS EVANGELICAL CHURCH (Lutheran)

Introduction

German immigrants arrived in British Kaffraria between 1856 and 1861. Many received land in the then environs of East London. The original church built by these immigrants was in Fleet Street, but this was sold to the Anglican church in 1872. Other small churches were built in Maclean Street and Cambridge. Pastor Heinrich Muller launched the 90 strong Lutheran congregation in 1872, but his educational duties proved too onerous and Pastor Baumgarten took over. Fund raising for a grand church began in 1879 and the foundation stone was laid in 1880. The new building was dedicated in November 1882, but cost much more than the original estimate. It took the congregation 40 years to pay off the debt.

Description

This Gothic styled church with an imposing spire. There are 17 beautiful stained glass windows were donated by St Andrews Lutheran Church in Hanover, Germany, in 1922 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary.

Location

50 Park Avenue.

Access

By permission of the pastor: 7222700

Recommendations

The interior is well worth visiting.

CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (Catholic)

By 1888 there were some 470 Catholics in East London and the hall in the convent was used as a chapel. Efforts were started in 1892 to build a proper church and the foundation stone was laid on 2 December 1893 and the completed church was consecrated on 24 June 1894.

Description

The building has a simple form with a small spire which is a roof vent. It has lancet and rose windows. Two of the stained glass windows are memorials to John Gately, a leading figure in early East London, and son, Thomas, his son, who died in 1899 of typhoid aged 25.

Location

44 Albany Street, but with no access from Buffalo Street.

Access

With permission of the priest; 722 1724

Recommendations

The interior is well worth a visit.

NEDERDUITSE GEREFORMEERDE KERK

Introduction

The first NGK church congregations were in Konga and Macleantown. In 1897, a small congregation in East London built a small hall in St Paul's Road. The population growth in East London and the congregation led to funds being raised and ground was purchased in 1915. The foundation stone was laid on 1 August 1921 and the first service held in April 1922. The organ was installed in 1928.

Description

The building has an articulated gabled roof with domed cylinders between the three sections.

Location

It is situated between Brill and Paterson Street.

Access

Permission of the dominie

Recommendations

Make contact with the dominie.

THE MOSQUE

Introduction

Indian people first started arriving in East London in about 1880. Muslim religious activity began under the leadership of Ebrahim Kola. The first services were held in houses, later an unused Christian church in Chapel Street was acquired. By the early 1920s, there were enough adherents to begin raising funds for a mosque. With the generous help of Mr Kemal Casoojee, the single storey building was completed. The second floor with a dome and a cottage for the Imam was built in 1950.

Description

The façade has arched windows and front door, with a balustrade parapet. The dome is supported by pillars.

Location

Porter Street.

Access

Permission of the Imam.

Recommendation

This should be recognized as forming an important part of the cultural heritage of the city.

King Williams Town:

CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, (Anglican)

Introduction

In 1848, Sir Harry Smith proposed to Bishop Robert Grey that a church should be built to serve the needs of military men stationed in King Williams Town, which was the headquarters of the military operations in the eastern Cape at the time. Bishop Grey selected the site and the original plans were modified by Sophia Grey. The soldiers donated money and the foundation stone was laid by Col G. Mackinnon in 1850. Lack of money delayed the completion and it was only completed, even then with only a canvas roof and a load of debts, in 1855. Matters improved with the arrival of Rev. Henry Kitton. The debts were cleared, a zinc roof replaced the canvass, the military waived their claim and it was finally consecrated in February 1861. During the war of 1877/ 78, it was designated a place of refuge. The walls began cracking and had to be re-enforced in 1879. The church was declared a National Monument in 1986.

Description

This is a very fine church in the neo Gothic style. The walls are of locally quarried bluestone and the floors of yellowwood from the Isidenge forest. The main doors were made from timber from the *Lady Kennaway*, wrecked in East London in 1857. The nave was extended in 1867. An aisle, a vestry and two lancet windows were added in 1864. The present organ was installed in 1880 and the Lady Chapel was added in 1897 as a memorial to the officers who were killed at Moordenaarskop in 1847. The stained glass window in the east wall is a memorial to Rev. Kitton. The pulpit and communion set were presented to the church in memory of the curate, John Gordon. The Jubilee Bell was a present of Mr J.M. Ellis in 1898. The tower was added in 1932 as a memorial to Archdeacon B.E. Holmes. The zinc roof was replaced with slate in 1935 and the present pews date to 1956.

Location

It is situated in Alexandra Road.

Access

By permission of the rector; parish office – 043 642 4154

Recommendations

This is an extremely interesting church with a rich history. The interior is well worth visiting even if tourists are not exclusively interested in church history. Contact should be made with the rector and the church should be requested to make the excellent booklet on their history available to tourists.

ST ANDREWS CHURCH (Presbyterian):**Introduction**

A group of adherents of the United Presbyterian Independent denomination met in a store and made a decision to form a congregation in 1861, with the assistance of local missionaries. The first minister was appointed in 1863 and they rented the Wesleyan chapel in Berkeley Street. They became part of the presbytery of Lovedale in 1870. In 1883 James Weir gave land. The church was built to the design of Mr Bompas of East London. The gates were presented in 1884.

Description

The church was built in the decorated Gothic style of local blue stone and there is an 80 ft tower. The stained glass windows are dedicated to the memory of John Brownlee, William and John Lumsden, and Francis Tudhope. A memorial tablet to those who died in the First World War was unveiled on 11 December 1921 and another memorial tablet was inscribed for those who died in the Second World War.

Location

Alexandra Road.

Access

By permission of the minister

Recommendations

Make contact with the minister.

Country Churches:**GONUBIE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH****Introduction**

Founded by the Scottish Settlers who settled in the area in 1877 under an immigration scheme. A wattle and daub building was the first church but swept away by a gale. A stone church was built in 1902, with the help of German neighbours.

Description

The simple building has a gothic arched doorway. The new wing of brick was added later.

Location

It can be reached by turning off the N2 at Brakfontein, then turn right over the bridge and it is signposted.

Access

Permission of the minister. 7374644

Recommendations

This church is well worth a visit. It is set in attractive country surroundings and the cemetery is of interest.

BRAKFONTEIN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Foundation stone dated 16 February 1902. Built by the Germans who settled in this area. It has had a fire, but has been rebuilt.

Turn off the N2 at the Brakfontein turnoff and follow the signs.

NCERA CHURCH (Methodist)

Introduction

From about 1860, white farmers were granted land in the area around Kidds Beach. Many were of 1820 stock. There were a sufficient number to form a congregation and to raise funds and undertake the building of a small chapel, which was completed in 1862. A wood and iron school room was built at the same time but has since been demolished. The roof and front door were replaced in 1960. The church was bought by the Dept of Community Development for handing over to the Ciskei in the 1970s. The hand-over was never completed and the church, which is one of the oldest extant churches between the Fish and Umzimkulu Rivers, was left abandoned. The Historical Society initiated a trust fund and undertook repairs which were completed in 1996.. It was declared a National Monument in 1993.

Description

This is a simple plastered brick building with a pitched roof and entrance porch. The cemetery is of particular interest.

Location

It is situated on the old Ncera Road. Turn off the R32 (before the turn-off to Kidds Beach) onto R347. 10 kilometres along turn left onto the old Ncera road at the old canning factory. The church is about 1 km on the right.

Access

At present through the Chairman, Border Historical Society, Miss J. Penrose Marks, 043-7811835. The local community is taking steps to take over the church for interdenominational services.

Recommendations

A meeting has been held with the local community who are very keen that this church could become a tourist attraction. They are talking of setting up a 'boma' and serving cool drinks etc. It would be of great service if this became part of a tourist route.