

ENGLISH HERITAGE REVIEW OF DIOCESAN CHURCHES 2005 (EXTRACT)

Our Lady of Lourdes, Queen of Peace, Rottingdean

Whiteway Lane, Rottingdean, East Sussex BN2 7GA



HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH

ARCHITECT(S) & DATE(S): Henry Bingham Towner 1957

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:

Henry Bingham Towner (1909-1997) was born and lived his life at Uckfield. He wanted to become a priest but, deciding that he was not suited to the

church, he trained as an architect and set up on his own in Uckfield in 1938. He specialised in church architecture and designed more than 25 new churches including St Wilfrids, Hailsham 1954, St Thomas of Canterbury, Mayfield 1957, Our Lady of Lourdes, Rottingdean 1957, St John Vianney Bexley Heath, St Teresa of Avila, Chiddingfold 1959, St Gabriel Billingshurst 1961, St Charles Borromeo, Worthing 1962, St Thomas More, Patcham 1963, St Thomas More, Seaford additions 1969 to church of 1935, St Francis of Assisi, Moulsecomb, additions 1969 to church of 1939, Holy Rood Pevensey Bay 1964, St Joseph's Milford 1969, Christ the King, Langney 1970, Holy Family, Lancing 1970.

Our Lady of Lourdes is one of Towner's better churches, partly owing to the use of flint in place of his more common use of reconstituted stone, and partly owing to the hillside location. The church seems to grow out of the hillside, with the saddleback tower at the highest point, over the sanctuary (the reverse of Billingshurst). The height of the tower was kept low due to concerns from the planning department. The flint is a facing over brick and the dressings are of re-constituted stone. Construction of the church took 18 months and cost £25,000. The church consists of clerestoried and aisled nave and sanctuary with short tower above. Whilst the exterior sits comfortably in its hillside location just away from the village centre, the interior is disappointing. It is very plain, plastered walls, the nave arcades have rather the effect of a pierced wall, the arches dying into the imposts. The nave has insufficient height in relation to width to impress and the canted ceiling is clad with acoustic panels. Whilst the church is clearly derived from the Gothic, the simplification is so extreme as to give more of a domestic than an ecclesiastical feel, such that the stone sanctuary arch almost looks out of place. Large nave and aisle windows have shallow four-centred arches and minimal curving tracery. There is no stained glass, apart from recent glass in the west window and in the Lady Chapel window. The west window was unveiled in 2000, was designed by Rosalind Sprey and made by Opus Glass of Poynings. The parish rooms to the south of the church obstruct and rather swamp the south view. They were opened in 1993, designed by Clive Ludd.

SOURCES

Douglas d'Enno *The Church in a Garden* 2001

D Robert Elleray *Sussex Places of Worship* 2004

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

One of Henry Bingham Towner's better churches but nonetheless not special architecturally. For its time it is very conservative in style.

