

15/01/2020

Liverpool's only Greek Orthodox Church celebrates its 150th birthday



The iconic building off Princes Avenue was built in 1870 and has served the city's eastern orthodox congregation ever since. The Greek Orthodox Church of St Nicholas is celebrating its 150th anniversary this week.

The only orthodox church in Liverpool, St Nicholas' has served parishioners from its iconic Berkley Street building, at the start of Princes Avenue, in Toxteth, since 1870.



The building's unique architecture was inspired by the Greek Orthodox tradition and was built by Greek merchants who settled in Liverpool.

The church itself is based on the design of the former Church of St. Theodorus, in Istanbul, which is now known as the Vefa Mosque.



Both share a distinctive, layered red and white exterior – although St. Nicholas is a

much bigger church than the building it was based on.

Its red and white exterior made from alternating red brick and white stone, and its unusual geometric arches, make it one of the most distinctive and easily recognisable buildings along Princes Avenue, a beautiful South Liverpool boulevard steeped in architectural history.



Many people walk or drive past the building on a daily basis without knowing the intricate beauty of the church's interior.

Inside the church is full of ornate features, beautiful marbled archways and a special wall of icons – images of saints in gilded portraits that have a particular significance to followers.

Speaking about the eastern orthodox tradition on the eve of the church's 150th birthday, being celebrated on January 15 with a special mass, Father Stavros told the ECHO: "The Greek Orthodox tradition has been in place for 2000 years and we haven't changed anything in that time.



“We even make the bread in the same way as 2000 years ago. And one of the features of our services, for example at Holy Week or Easter, is that we relive the events. We relive out the day from our literature.

“The icons are a part of our tradition and have been part of the Greek orthodox tradition since the 7th century. We respect them – sometimes people think that we worship them, but that’s not accurate – we respect them.



“For our people, the church is where they come for anything – to confess, to pray,

to celebrate.

For the community we help out at hospital and we will attend other celebrations – we try to mingle in – it's all for the good of the people.

We have a lot of visitors, including from schools and pensioners and we have a lot of nice reactions. People are amazed at how beautifully kept the inside of the church is.

It needs maintenance but the church is kept up by the people who support it and they support it very well. We have some help with certain types of work because it is a listed building. But it is the community who keep the building going.



We've been through two world wars and the riots and nothing happened to our building – people in the area respect the church and the local community are very good with us."



The Greek merchants who came to Liverpool in the 19th century and built the church were attracted to the city by the huge industrial growth of the city during the Victorian era.

With many of their business based at the nearby docks, the merchants chose to make home in what has long been one of Liverpool's most multi-cultural areas and construct their church amidst other iconic places of worship in the heart of L8.



The building was designed by architects W and J Hay, whose design was chosen following a competition, and the building of the church was overseen by Henry Sumners, the son of a Bold Street bootmaker and well-renowned architect who was also responsible for many other city buildings. He also designed the layout for Cressington Park.

The first service was held on 15 January 1870 with a special mass held by Alexandros Lykourgos – it will be recreated on Wednesday with a special Vigil Mass.

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