

Since that time, Day Services has been enlarged, while grants were also obtained to extend the reception to allow for a larger café and more seating space. Further improvements were made in 2009 in relation to disability access.

In 2013, Day Services was further enlarged to increase the range of activities on offer. A number of artworks have been installed over the years, please see separate Artwork in the Hospice leaflet.

In July 2015 a devastating fire destroyed a significant area of the building, mostly affecting patient areas. The In-Patient Unit moved temporarily, renting space in a local care home where patients continued to be looked after by Hospice clinical staff.

An extensive renovation programme, completed in September 2016, resulted in significant improvements to the building including: a full provision of private en-suite bedrooms for patients over the ground and first floors; improved access, refurbishment of the reception, conservatory and café; major upgrading of the kitchen and an increased number of counselling and treatment rooms.



Now: St Michael's Hospice café

www.stmichaelsospice.com



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St Michael's hospice

History of the Hospice



St Michael's Hospice

St Michael's Hospice has an interesting history. It is built on land originally belonging to Gensing Farm which, in 1828, was purchased by James Burton when he started to design the new town of St Leonards on Sea. The first house, known as Gensing Lodge, roughly the central part of the current building, was built for Elizabeth and Catherine Dyneley, who lived here for fifty years.

St Augustine's: The start of a tradition of care

The Augustinian Sisters of the Holy Heart of Mary were an order founded by Victoire Letellier (1778-1859), called Mother St Angèle, in Paris in 1827. There is a portrait of her in the Chapel and a short information leaflet.

After opening a number of foundations in France, the Congregation decided to come to England and purchased Gensing Lodge, which they opened on 4th December 1886, as a care home for elderly ladies who had no family or wanted a quiet atmosphere in their later years. The house was soon full and had to be enlarged.

In September 1900 a Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes was constructed in front of the productive kitchen garden. The following year a large crucifix was erected opposite the grotto: the original was destroyed during the Second World War but re-constructed after the cessation of hostilities.

In 1913 the original chapel of Gensing Lodge was too small for the 18 Sisters, residents and visitors. It was decided, therefore, to build a new one. Financed by donations from local tradesmen and through fundraising by the lady boarders, the chapel building was designed by Canon Scoles with the foundation stone being laid on 25th March 1913. The 80 year old Catholic artist N. Westlake undertook the internal decoration and the building was opened on 5th August 1913. The first Mass was said the following day. The 100th anniversary of the Chapel was celebrated in 2013.

During the First World War, refugees from France were given shelter, including two young princesses from a European royal family. In May 1928 a nursing home was opened with the third floor of the building being altered and an operating theatre installed. St Augustine's fifty year anniversary was celebrated in 1936 with three days of festivities. The Sisters' refectory was enlarged at this time, with a floor built into the roof space over the Sisters' rooms and a new block added. On 3rd April 1939, a statue of The Virgin Mary, designed by Dom Scott, was erected on the external wall first floor of the new block. The Sisters named it 'Our Lady of Joy'.

Upon the outbreak of war in 1939, the nursing home was transformed into a maternity unit for mothers evacuated from London; 100 babies were born there between September and December 1939. However, in 1940 the sisters decided that it was time for them to move inland to Clock House at Nutley and the buildings were requisitioned by the Army. A severe air raid on 24th May 1943 caused damage to the roof and windows of Gensing Lodge and the laundry. In the 'new block' the statue of 'Our Lady of Joy' moved but did not fall.

After strong persuasion by the Mother Superior, the house was de-requisitioned in 1945 and the keys handed back to the Sisters, who resumed their work of caring for elderly ladies, additionally using the third floor for convalescent and terminally ill patients. In the late 1960s the operating theatre was re-opened for eye operations, and the chapel was also redecorated.

The numbers of Sisters in the Order began to reduce and in 1984 the building was put up for sale.

New beginnings

Coincidentally, a project led by Sheila Leach, whose photograph can be seen in reception, had been started to establish a hospice locally and the Hospice Committee considered the feasibility of buying the site. After 18 months of hard work, negotiations were successfully concluded and St Augustine's was acquired by the Hospice Committee, including the running of the Nursing Home.

In January 1985, at a Service of Translation in the Chapel, the keys of St Augustine's Nursing Home were symbolically handed over to St Michael's Hospice. While the Nursing Home continued to run effectively at one end of the building, the Sisters' previous living quarters (at the current reception end of the Hospice) were adapted for in-patient care. Much restoration work had to be carried out, including the building of a new Day Centre and Reception area. The official opening of the Hospice took place on 24th April 1987.



Then: Clinical team on the wards