

# Accounting Historians Notebook

---

Volume 8  
Number 1 *Spring 1985*

Article 8

---

Spring 1985

## Finances of All Saints Church in Rome

Robert William Gibson

Follow this and additional works at: [https://egrove.olemiss.edu/aah\\_notebook](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/aah_notebook)



Part of the [Accounting Commons](#), and the [Taxation Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Gibson, Robert William (1985) "Finances of All Saints Church in Rome," *Accounting Historians Notebook*: Vol. 8 : No. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: [https://egrove.olemiss.edu/aah\\_notebook/vol8/iss1/8](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/aah_notebook/vol8/iss1/8)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Archival Digital Accounting Collection at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Accounting Historians Notebook by an authorized editor of eGrove. For more information, please contact [egrove@olemiss.edu](mailto:egrove@olemiss.edu).

# THE FINANCES OF ALL SAINTS CHURCH IN ROME

by  
*Robert W. Gibson*  
*Deakin University*

Waiting a week in Rome for a flight home from the Fourth World Congress of Accounting Historians provided time to discover an extraordinary piece of ecclesiastical history. In this history finance and accounting have been singularly important.

A short distance from the Spanish steps, in Baboon Street (via del Babuino), stands the only English gothic church in Rome. Even Pope John XXIII told the chaplain how he enjoyed picking out with his field glasses the sparkling white travertine spire. All Saints church was built in 1887.

The history of All Saints tells us that minute books and registers have survived from the first church. The register of services kept weekly and even daily since 1881 in the vestry of the two successive churches provides much information. The registers of baptisms, marriages and burials date from December 1825. The story of how these records survived two world wars is a romantic story of the courage and initiative of a trio of English matrons who had long resided in Rome with their Italian husbands.

When the present church was built the birth pangs were long and drawn out. The expensive requirements of the architect's specifications for special materials did not help. When money ran out in 1883 the chaplain "stepped in with the first of his personal, unsecured loans, which were to total, it seems, no less than 5,000 pounds Sterling between then and 1886 - a considerable fortune to lend at a moderate 5%. Much of the debt to him was outstanding when he died, and All Saints'

only surfaced from its long period "in the red" in 1920.

By July 1885, the chancel end was finished and roofed, the tower was up to one third of its height, and the vestry, library above, and organ chamber adjacent had been completed. But nearly a year later there was still no roof on the nave and aisles, and Canon Wasse saw no option but to lend the remaining sum required, or the church would never open, he feared, for worship. Canon Henry Wasse is deservedly commemorated by an imposing memorial brass in the vestry.

If he did not live to receive back all of that massive loan which he had poured out to see the building completed, at least we are told that "private information" enabled him in his final illness to extract from a Roman bank the current assets of All Saints', to be placed elsewhere. A mere week or two later, the bank failed. The financing of foreign chaplaincies never was quite like running a parish at home . . .

Mrs. Wasse made brave efforts (and offers) to have the unfinished tower completed, but there was so much prevarication that the spire was added only in time for the jubilee in 1937. How much the more costly for the long delay, and how munificent of the anonymous donor who was finally responsible for our unique landmark in brilliant white travertine!

The functioning and finances of All Saints has been enhanced by the Church House which includes the chaplain's flat. The copperplate accounts of the builder from 1908 show the final cost at 100,000 lire. Again finance was critical.

The leading advocate of building the house (and finally its fairy godfather) was Mr. Alfred Chenevix Trench, whose long term of office as Churchwarden ended only in 1938. Despite all the minuted agreements about finance, he seems eventually to have been left "holding the baby" and, like Canon Wasse before him, he showed great public spirit in shouldering the debt. Eventually he made an outright gift of 3,000 pounds Sterling.

It must be noted that, contrary to popular opinion, All Saints has never received financial support from Her Majesty's government. Appointment of the chaplain as chaplain to the ambassador is likewise an honorary post.

#### REFERENCES

David H. Palmer, *Be-larged, Be-organed and Be-beautiful*.

*A Short History of All Saints' Anglican Church Rome*, 86 pp. and *A Walk-Round Guide to All Saints' Anglican Church Rome*, 36 pp. Rome, 1981, Available from the Secretary, Via del Babuino 153B, 00187 Roma, Italy.

Donation 3,000 lire plus postage.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIAN WRITINGS ON COST ACCOUNTING

Professor R. H. Anderson of the Footscray Institute of Technology has compiled "A Bibliography of Australian Writings on Cost Accounting, 1910-1935," which references articles, lectures, books and addresses on cost accounting in Australia. The bibliography provides a summary of these works.

The price of the bibliography is \$10 Australian to cover printing and postage costs. Send your request to: Department of Accountancy and Law, P.O. Box 64, Footscray, 3011, Victoria Australia.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### CALL FOR PAPERS

The 1986 American Accounting Association Mid-Atlantic Regional meeting will be held at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on May 1-3, 1986. At least one history session is being planned and papers are being solicited. Individuals interested in submitting papers for consideration should send them to: Yaw M. Mansah, Department of Accountancy, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903. The deadline is December 1, 1985. Three copies should be submitted. Discussants are also needed. Anyone interested in being a discussant for a history paper should send their name and area of interest to the above address.