



Sir Christopher Wren

Born in East Knoyle on 20th October 1632
Died in London on 25th February 1723
Buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, London
Architect, scientist and mathematician

Sir Christopher Wren was one of the country's most distinguished architects, best known for the design of many London churches, including St. Paul's Cathedral.

Wren was born in East Knoyle, Wiltshire, the only surviving son of Dr. Christopher Wren, rector of East Knoyle.

He was educated at Westminster School and then Oxford University where he studied science and mathematics. After receiving his M.A. in 1653, Wren was elected a fellow of All Souls College and began an active period of research and experiment in Oxford. In 1657 he was appointed Professor of Astronomy at Gresham College in London, followed 4 years later with an appointment as Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford.

In 1662 he was one of the founding members of the Royal Society, along with other eminent mathematicians, scientists and scholars who were colleagues of his. The records of the Royal Society state that Wren's works ranged from astronomy, optics, the problem of finding

longitude at sea, cosmology, mechanics, microscopy, surveying, medicine and meteorology, as well as inventing and improving a variety of instruments. It was from these labours that Wren then began to focus on architecture.

In 1664 and 1665 Wren was commissioned to design the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford and a chapel for Pembroke College, Cambridge. The former building was his first design utilizing the dome which would become his trademark. In 1665 he visited Paris and became strongly influenced by French and Italian baroque, and architecture became his main focus. In 1666 the Great Fire of London occurred, destroying much of the city and providing a great opportunity for Wren to provide ambitious plans to King Charles II for rebuilding the area.

Although his plans were never actually adopted, he was appointed King's Surveyor of Works in 1669 (retaining the title until 1718) and was personally responsible for overseeing the rebuilding of 51 churches.

In the same year, Wren married his childhood neighbour, Faith Coghill. The couple had 2 children, one of whom died in infancy. His son Christopher also went on to become an architect and supervised the topping out ceremony of St. Paul's in 1710. Faith Wren died in 1675, and in 1677 Wren married again, this time to Jane Fitzwilliam, with whom he had 2 children. Unfortunately this marriage was also brief when Jane died in 1680. Wren never married again. Wren received a knighthood in 1673 for his work after the Great Fire and designed The Monument in the City of London commemorating it.

In 1675 he was commissioned to design the Royal Observatory at Greenwich. Other commissions included Trinity College Library, Cambridge in 1677, and the Chelsea Hospital for retired soldiers in 1682. After Charles II's death in 1685, Wren designed a new chapel, gallery, council chamber and riverside apartment for James II. After his removal from the throne, Wren took on projects such as the facade of Hampton Court Palace and improvements to Kensington Palace For William III in 1689.

Later in his career, he was appointed Surveyor of Greenwich Naval Hospital in 1696 and Surveyor of Westminster Abbey in 1699. St. Paul's remains the touchstone of his reputation and spanned most of his career throughout the 36 years it took to build until its completion in 1711. He was buried there when he died in 1723, and his gravestone features a Latin inscription which translates as "Reader, If you seek his monument, look around you."

Source Unknown