



Registered Charity No. 1160314

# The Friends of St Peter's Newsletter

## Number 20 – Spring 2023

### Introduction by the Chairman of the Trustees

The Inaugural David Pearce Memorial Lecture was held on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2022. The Trustees were delighted that an audience of about 230 people were enthralled by Sir Robin Knox-Johnston's lecture and that over £4,000 was raised towards the cost of the repairs to the roof of St Peter's. A full report on this event can be found on our website at [stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk](http://stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk) under News and Events.

We are also delighted that our Patron, the Venerable Jane Mainwaring, has become the Bishop of Hertford. A short article on her is below. This Newsletter also contains articles on Sustaining Rectory Lane Cemetery and Maintaining St Peter's Church, together with reviews of both the celebrations and events to mark the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St Peter's and Christopher Green's excellent book on the Church. I commend them all to you.

Finally, this is the last time that I will be writing the introduction to our Newsletter. I have been privileged to be Chairman of the Trustees since the inception of the Friends in March 2013 and I have decided that now is the time to stand down. I am enormously grateful for the support I have received from my fellow Trustees over the last 10 years and I am delighted that I will be succeeded as Chairman on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023 by Father Stuart Owen, the Rector of St Peter's.

*Peter Williamson*

### Jane, Bishop of Hertford

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023 our Patron, the Venerable Jane Mainwaring, became Bishop of Hertford.



Jane has spent much of her ministry in the Diocese of St Albans – as Archdeacon, a parish priest, and a rural dean and she became Patron of the Friends of St Peter's in 2020.

Jane studied Theology and Religious Studies at Leeds University and also at Trinity College, Carmarthen.

Following her appointment, the Venerable Jane Mainwaring said:

*'I am delighted to still be associated with the Friends of St Peter's in my new capacity as Bishop of Hertford and look forward to continuing to support its work as Patron. I remain grateful for all the support which the Friends give to enable St Peter's to remain such a magnificent visual symbol of God's presence in Berkhamsted'*

### Sustaining Rectory Lane Cemetery

Now that the Lottery Funded phase finished and with the Cemetery receiving no statutory funding, we have to rely on individual donations and successful grant applications to bring in the vital funds needed to ensure that this restored open space remains cared for and, where possible, enhanced further.



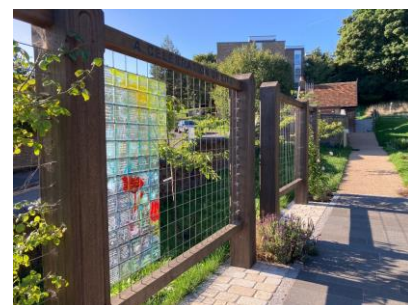
*The Garden of Remembrance is a particularly beautiful and restful part of the cemetery.*

We have now invested money in establishing an area for the interment of ashes, just below the Garden, which is bordered with a variety of hardy low flowering shrubs.

In addition to the statutory interment fees, payable to the Diocese and to the Parochial Church Council, we are asking relatives to make a donation direct to the Project, in recognition of the special nature of the place and the need to secure its future.



Within the Garden there is a growing Celebration of Life wall. Here members of the community are able to imbue the space with even more poignancy by expressing their



love for those people, both living and dead, in a very personal way with text inscribed onto a fused glass tile. The glass tiles, individually designed and hand-crafted by a glass artist, are collectively forming a beautiful and colourful image of a garden border.

Anyone interested in an interment plot or in commissioning a tile should contact [team@rectorylanecemetery.org.uk](mailto:team@rectorylanecemetery.org.uk)

# Maintaining St Peter's Church

## Caring for St Peter's – The cost

St Peter's Church is a large and architecturally important building. The parish alone is responsible for the care and conservation of this architectural heritage. It must also make sure that as a working building St Peter's meets 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations, particularly in terms of energy conservation and Health and Safety. Later this year the parish will launch an appeal for funds to meet the cost of major repairs. A first priority is the replacement of the copper roofs over the south aisle and St John's Chantry, but other major concerns include stabilising the east wall of the Lady Chapel and the future of the heating system. These undertakings will cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. This is not the first time that the parish has faced the need to raise sums of this size. In this article I want to look at how the cost of caring for St Peter's has been met in the past. It's a history against which we can judge our own response to the challenge we face.

## Rich patrons in the Middle Ages

We know nothing about the cost of building St Peter's in the early years of the 13<sup>th</sup> century or about the cost of works to extend and enrich the building during the Middle Ages. What we do know is that important elements of the cost were met by the generosity of people living and working in the town. Geoffrey Fitz Peter, Lord of the Manor of Berkhamsted 1206 --1213, probably played a major role in directing and funding the original work of building the church. Later, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Torrington family was involved in work



Margaret and Richard Torrington  
14<sup>th</sup> Century Benefactors

to extend and beautify the church. We learn from antiquarian sources that the Torrington coat of arms was once widely displayed in the church which is typical of medieval churches where rich merchants funded work of building and restoration. In the 1530s, we know that the upper stage of the tower was added. It seems to have been the gift of 'John Phyllyp and Alice his wife'. Their names were once visible inscribed on a stone on the south side of the tower.

## Paying the Rates

From the time of the English Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the *de facto* local authority in every parish was the Vestry, comprising the Incumbent, the Churchwardens and a body of parishioners. The Vestry was responsible for parish amenities, for the care of the poor and for the maintenance of roads and the church building and could raise taxes to meet the cost of these responsibilities. These taxes were raised from all landowners in the parish on a rate per acre basis. The Churchwardens accounts in the 17<sup>th</sup> century reveal the practicalities of this system. For example, in August 1613 a levy was agreed at 4d/acre for arable and 12d/acre for meadow specifically to cover the cost of replacing the lead on the Lady Chapel roof. The grand total of payments received was £34.9s.8d, sufficient to fund a project with a cost today of about £100,000.

## The Gothic Revival

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century renewed confidence in the place of the Church of England in British society was accompanied by a growing interest in church architecture. In this context St Peter's experienced four campaigns of restoration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Our knowledge of the costs and the associated fund-raising is far from complete. For the restoration of St Peter's by Wyatt which began in 1818, the parish received a grant of £200 (c.£15,000 in today's money) from a national grant-awarding scheme, the Church Building Commission, established in the same year.

The first phase of the Butterfield restorations (1868-72) didn't deal with the north transept or the aisles. In 1880 the south aisle was restored as a memorial to Robert Smith Dorrien, funded by his friends and neighbours. This generosity almost certainly encouraged the parish to embark on a campaign to complete the restoration of the church. This development was initiated with a public meeting in the Town Hall where it was agreed to raise the necessary funds by public appeal. The total cost was estimated at £800 (at least £90,000 in today's money). The north transept was tackled first and by the time this work was complete, £490 had been raised and a bill of £475 was due for payment. Unfortunately, the appeal was already faltering, and the Restoration Committee realised it couldn't proceed immediately with the work on the north aisle. Renewed efforts were made to revive the appeal and the work was completed before the end of 1882. Further work continued through the 1880s and the Archbishop of Canterbury visited St Peter's in 1888 to celebrate the completion of the work.

A striking feature of the attention given to St Peter's in the later years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is the great generosity of the church community. Between 1868 when the Butterfield restoration began and 1914 thirteen new stained glass windows were donated to the church. Also donated at this time were a new reredos above the high altar, a new font, a new brass eagle lectern, a new pulpit, and a new screen and reredos in St Catherine's Chapel.

## Fund-raising in the 20th century

For forty years following the outbreak of the First World War little changed at St Peter's. It wasn't until the 1950s that the parish once again took on the tasks of restoration and re-ordering. The parish magazine in September 1954 announced a fund-raising Gift Day for St Peter's and refers to the crumbling fabric and the drabness of the decoration. An appeal to the wider community of the town followed.

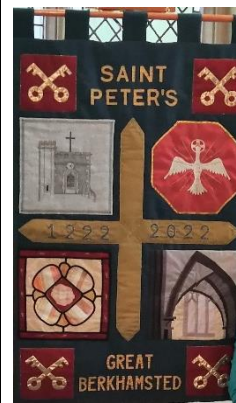


Estimates for the cost of the proposed work were around £3,000 (c. £72,000 in today's money), but work on the church soon brought to light a serious problem and escalating costs.

## 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year Review

It has been amazing to look back on 800 years of St Peter's church and the changing times during which it has contributed so much to Berkhamsted life.

Key features of the anniversary events were:



- A series of talks in the church, and one in the Centenary Theatre
- Music and dancing
- A beautiful new banner created by ladies of the congregation and blessed by Bishop John.
- A pilgrimage walk, beating the parish bounds and a quiet day at Douai Abbey
- Summer tea party and Petertide Fair
- A celebration dinner attended by 152 people
- Festival of light with 1000+ lights in the church, and 3000+ visitors

The year was a success. Everybody in Berkhamsted knows about St Peter's and its 800 year history. Hundreds of our fellow citizens visited our church, many of whom had never entered it before.

Sincere thanks to all who helped to make this anniversary so successful. Special mention must be made of the huge amount of work put in by Stephen Lally and Pru Murray, without whom many of these events would not have taken place.

### Review of Christopher Green's book St Peter's Church, Great Berkhamsted 1222 – 2022

This is such a welcome and timely book, appearing as it does a century after R.A. Norris brought the history of St Peter's up to date exactly 100 years ago.

Christopher Green is a Trustee of The Friends of St Peter's and has been involved in the Church, particularly with the Building Committee, for over 40 years - so no-one else has such familiarity with all the nooks and foibles of this large Parish Church.

For this is a book that focusses on the development of the fabric of the Church. It's a useful manual if you just want to get to grips with the sequence of architectural styles that underpin the dating and phases of medieval church architecture. But applied here so skilfully by the author to St Peter's, the different Gothic styles are used to tell a fascinating story of the evolution of the church from the twelfth through to the fifteenth century.

Linking the origins of the Church to the wealth of Berkhamsted brought about by having the Castle as the other bookend to Castle Street, and so benefitting from royal patronage, the cruciform plan of the Church took shape from the beginning; the chancel appears to have been built first, between

*Continued overleaf*

The roof of the nave was beyond repair and had to be entirely replaced. The work was completed in 1960 and the eventual cost was about £24,000 (c. £480,000 in today's money). It was almost entirely raised by the appeal to the townspeople of Berkhamsted.



1958 – The Rector inspects the damage

The new arrangements at St Peter's served until the 1980s. A new Rector was installed in 1981 and the parish was soon looking at work of restoration and re-ordering. September 1984 saw the launch of an appeal to the wider community for £150,000 (£585,000 in today's money). Major elements of this cost were a new organ, a new heating system and the removal of accumulated grime from the stonework of the exterior. As with previous campaigns the eventual cost was significantly greater than the original estimate – about £225,000 (c. £619,000 in today's money) which was once again raised almost entirely through the generosity of people living and working in Berkhamsted.

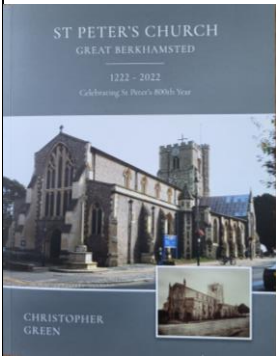
Nearly forty years have passed since this last major appeal was launched. The church community has not been idle in that time. Care of St Peter's, the building and its furnishings has been an ongoing concern. There have been regular repairs to the fabric of the building, its stonework and its roofs, large parts of the church have been redecorated, the lighting, heating, and sound systems have been replaced, the organ has been renovated, monumental brasses, hatchments and the royal coat of arms have been conserved. The cost of this work has been met largely by the church community itself, but St Peter's has a significance beyond that community, it has and has always had a central place in the life of the town. This brief account has shown that the townspeople have always recognised this significance and been generous in their support for the care of the building. Now the time has come to turn again to this wider community to make good the fabric of the building and make it fit to serve that wider community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*By Christopher Green*



Photograph of St Peter's by Jean Wild which won a prize in the Open Category of the 800th Anniversary Photographic Competition

1190 and 1222, followed by the crossing, where the masons left their marks. The nave followed, then came St John's Chantry and the South Porch in the second half of the C13th, and finally St Catherine's Chapel by the early C14th. The anomaly is perhaps the elegantly vaulted Lady Chapel, which sits comfortably with the north transept; Christopher proposes it was constructed before work was carried out on the nave.



Following the Reformation, remodelling of the Church appears to have largely come to a standstill until the building was caught up in the C19th surge of restoration. Even so, there are still some fine memorials from this period, and the point is made that the work of Wyatt (in 1818) and Butterfield (1868-1882) undoubtedly swept away evidence of some of these

post-Reformation changes. The elegant font donated by Francis Wethered has now migrated to All Saints' Church, but there was also once a vestry built against the chancel, and even a cottage against the south aisle. Internally a musicians gallery spanned the crossing, and the Church was filled by tall box pews.

In the C19th restorations, doors in every elevation were blocked up. Butterfield removed Wyatt's render and reconstructed walls in flint; all the windows were reconstructed; the old pews were replaced and any traces of medieval decoration finally removed.

In the late 1950s, the whole nave roof required replacing; and the altar was brought forward into the crossing. It created a more intimate relationship for worship and introduced the stunning Peter Collins organ, but sadly, the huge mural was painted out and the chancel closed off for use as a vestry, and thereby lost to view.

At 100 pages, the book contains no irrelevant digressions – just well-disciplined, snappy, bite-sized sections. Their brevity and readability- providing just the right amount of context - are partly accounted for by appearing as short Facebook articles early in 2022, such an innovative approach to producing Church histories, and surely one that others could usefully follow. There is something to delight or intrigue, aided by the visual richness of the photographs, on every page. There is undoubtedly more to tell - graffiti and the Churchwardens Accounts are touched on, but recent work on both perhaps offer an opportunity for Volume II...

*Caring for a great medieval building is a challenge that has no end.* This book admirably reveals the significance of so much that St Peter's has to offer in visual terms, and the efforts that have been made to preserve this remarkable building over 800 years. The urgency to continue to do so will be enshrined once again in a forthcoming appeal.

But the narrative above all also roots the Church firmly in the town, and the fact that so many individuals have shaped its development reminds us that we all have a responsibility to ensure its survival and enhancement as one of Berkhamsted's finest heritage assets.

By James Moir

## Become a Friend

To join the Friends please use this application form (or a photocopy of it). Alternatively, you can download an application form from the Friends website:

[www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk](http://www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk)

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Full Name:
Address:
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Please pay The Friends of St Peter's Church Great Berkhamsted, A/c No. 64109216, NatWest Bank (60-02-21) the sum of:

£	Amount in words
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Beginning on :

Date:
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and annually thereafter until further notice, charging my account:

Account Name:
Sort Code:
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Signature:

Please return this form to: Paul Crosland, 11 Upper Hall Park, Berkhamsted, HP4 2NW