

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ST PETER'S CHURCH, HAMMERSMITH



ST PETER'S CHURCH

"The oldest church in Hammersmith and the only loveable one, although cheaply built and shabby." (Nikolaus Pevsner)

These days it is hard to imagine, but back in 1829 St Peter's Church stood in solitary splendour, surrounded on all sides by meadows, market gardens and smallholdings. The new church faced out upon a T-junction formed by Black Lion Lane, which ran southwards until it reached the Upper Mall by the river and an unfinished road leading west into St Peter's Square. Residential dwellings and commercial buildings were to gradually replace the fields and farms as Hammersmith flourished during the remainder of the nineteenth century.

On November 8th 1836, The London Gazette defined the boundaries of St Peter's District as follows:

"It is bounded on the west by the Parish of Chiswick; on the south by the River Thames, the Creek and the High Bridge and the Worple Way to the southern extremity of Waterloo Street; on the east northwardly Waterloo Street, including the west side of that street; then westward, by King's Street, that is the turnpike road leading from London to Brentford, as far as Webb's Lane, as far as Gould Hawke Road; and on the north by Gould Hawke Road until the said ancient road terminates in Chiswick parish at Stamford Brook."

Although some of the names have changed or disappeared, the parish boundaries remain the same today, 179 years after the foundation stone of St Peter's Church was laid on 16th May 1827

The village of Hammersmith had been in existence for some hundreds of years by the seventeenth century and was steadily increasing in size and prosperity. The River Thames was a great source of trade and income. Bakers, potters, chandlers and taverns dotted the banks of the river, while the main western coaching road ran out of London through Hammersmith and onwards to Bath and Bristol.

Hammersmith riverside now lies in two separate parishes, St Peter's and St Paul's. In the early seventeenth century the nearest place of worship available to the residents of Hammersmith was All Saints Church in Fulham. Without a horse it was difficult to reach, particularly in winter. In 1631 St Paul's Church in Hammersmith was built to ease the problem.

Meanwhile, London continued to expand westwards, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century significant housing development in the southwest

corner of Hammersmith led to the need for another place of worship. In 1801 the population of Hammersmith was given as 5,600 people. By 1831 this figure was to rise to over 10,000. Before St Peter's was built there was enough accommodation in the local churches for only 3,158 worshippers.

A large fund (in the region of one million pounds) had been raised to celebrate the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Victory at Waterloo in June 1815. During the reign of King George IV, Parliament passed the Church Building Act, which established a body of commissioners with powers to contribute to acceptable schemes from the fund. His Majesty's Commissioners received many applications from towns and villages throughout England to provide funding for monuments and places of worship.

The first application for a 'chapel of ease' for Hammersmith was refused.

'...Due to the state of parliamentary funds, then nearly exhausted, the Commissioners were unable to grant the sum requested'.

However, in June 1824 a second round of grants provided a further £500,000 and permission to build St Peter's Church was finally given. St Peter's is known a 'Waterloo church', one of several built at the time.

The Land

George Scott, one of six children, was born into a prosperous family in Hammersmith in 1780. The Scott family lived 'elegantly' in a fine house on the Lower Mall at Hammersmith although they also owned property and land in central London, including Grosvenor Place and Queen Anne Street.

In 1807 George married Hannah Lucy Stoe, the daughter of another wealthy local family. She brought, as her marriage settlement, the sum of £5,000, a large portion of land south of Ravenscourt Park and the land around Black Lion Lane (now St Peter's Square). In June 1812 George Scott and his father-in-law Harry Stoe bought Ravenscourt Mansion, together with its stables, coach houses and adjoining grounds for £15,000. George and Hannah made it their family home.

By the 1820s Scott had become deeply involved in the religious, social and business life of Hammersmith. He was one of the main investors in the Hammersmith Suspension Bridge in 1827, not least because his own interests lay in the land surrounding that area of the river. He was a well-known and

respected magistrate who provided generously to the causes of his poorer neighbours.

Memories of St Peter's by Sir William Bull 1922

'When old George Scott, of Ravenscourt, gave the ground and subscribed very liberally to the building of the Church, he secretly hoped that the Authorities would call the Church St George's as a polite compliment to him. But he did not make his wishes known, with the result that the Bishop of London decided to name it St Peter's. Scott then objected, but it was too late. Herewith I append a characteristic and amusing letter, which Mr Scott wrote at the time.'

11th April 1827

My dear Sir,

Thanks to my Piety the new Church is begun at last, but the Parsons will have it named after that papistical Saint, Peter, because not seeing it in the proper light, as you have done, they had the politeness to tell me they think "George is such a heathenist Saint". However, Piety is its own reward, and I have lent between 4 & 500 per annum on building leases and am 'Petering' away in Squares, Crescents and Terraces and I hope to finish with the "St George and Dragon" and we shall then see which Saint gets most custom.

Yours most truly,

George Scott

George and Hannah had three daughters. The eldest, Lucy Hannah, was born in 1809, followed by Marrienne in 1811 and Georgiana in 1814. Sadly, Hannah Scott died in 1816 at the age of twenty-six. George remarried a few years later to a widow, Mrs Hannah Gibson. They went on to have two more daughters, Jessy Emma and Hannah.

It was Hannah Lucy Stoe's dowry of land that provided the plot on which St Peter's Church was to be built.

'The want of further accommodation for Divine Service had long been felt in the increasing Hamlet of Hammersmith. Some difficulty was experienced in obtaining an eligible site, but in June 1826 George Scott Esq. of Ravenscourt, most handsomely presented the parish with an eligible plot of land in Black Lion Lane.'

Faulkner's History 1839

The Architect

The architect of the church, Edward Lapidge, was born in Hampton Wick, Surrey in 1793. His father, Samuel Lapidge, was a landscape gardener who worked at Hampton Court as an assistant to Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Between 1756 and 1784 Samuel Lapidge worked on extensive alterations to the landscape gardens at Chiswick House for the 5th Duke of Devonshire, the results of which can still be enjoyed today.

As a young man Edward Lapidge became a surveyor to the county of Surrey and in this capacity designed his principal work – the old stone bridge that still spans the Thames at Kingston.

In 1823, Lapidge was a finalist in a competition to design a set of new buildings for King's College, Cambridge. In 1835 he was again a finalist in the competition to design the Fitzwilliam Museum. Some of his successfully completed works include: - Hampton Wick Church (1829), the rebuilding of Hampton Church (1830), St Mary's Church, Putney (1836) and the enlargement of Fulham Church (1839). In 1852 he designed Reigate Police Station. As a Fellow of the Institute of British Architects he exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1808 and 1850. He died in 1860 and is buried at Hampton Wick Church.

The Building

Although George Scott donated the site itself, substantial financial contributions were provided by Doctor Horsley, Bishop of London (£250) and the Revd William Wood, Rector and Vicar of Fulham, (£500). The sale of parcels of land at Shepherds Bush and Starch Green raised £1,280 10s and this was added to the £9,099 grant obtained from His Majesty's Commissioners. St Peter's Church was eventually built at a cost of nearly £14,000, (roughly equivalent to £1,800,000 in 2006). George and William Bird, well-known and successful local builders were contracted to build the church. The foundation stone was laid on 16th May 1827

'St Peter's Chapel which affords accommodation to 1,600 persons, including 600 free seats, appropriated to the use of the poor, and in which divine service is regularly performed.'

Faulkner's History 1839

This elegant chapel stands on the bank of the Thames, and on the borders of the populous hamlet of Hammersmith, about half a mile above the Suspension Bridge. The ground was given by _ Scott Esq. and the Chapel erected by His Majesty's Commissioners. It is a handsome Grecian ionic structure from the design of Edward Lapidge Esq. the ingenious architect of Kingston New Bridge... The chapel is of Suffolk brick finished with bath stone. The tower being entirely of the latter material.... Perhaps St Peter's Church may be referred to as one of the most successful structures of its kind in the environs of the metropolis. There is harmony and much classic beauty in the design; it is free from elaborate or unnecessary ornament; and allowing the Grecian to be the appropriate architecture for a church, the whole structure is complimentary to the taste and talents of the architect.

The introduction of Egyptian doorways in St Peter's may be objected to; but if a fault and censurable, this is far from a solitary instance of such a choice."

'The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction' February 1830

"The front has an attached Ionic portico: above is an attic. The tower has an octagonal base, a circular stage, with antae attached, which gives it an octagonal appearance; and a

cupola and cross. The body of the church is a plain rectangle of Suffolk brick and Bath stone, with one row of round-headed windows. The vestries are underneath the galleries, which stand on Tuscan columns; there is no upper order. The church has been re-seated and a choir formed. The east window is by Clayton and Bell; decorations round it by Sir William Richmond and murals on the east wall of 1928 and 1930. The reredos, 1906, is by G.C.Horsley. A statue of the Virgin Mary is by Alan Howes (a pupil of Eric Gill).

From 'Parish Churches of London' by BFL Clarke, Batsford, 1966

The Early Years

“ 15th October 1829, St Peter's Church was consecrated. A fine day!”

John Osborne, evidently a man of few words and first clerk to the parish marked this special occasion in his diary.

'It was on October 15th 1829 when our grandfathers' grandparents were young, that Bishop Blomfield came in his coach to consecrate the new church in Black Lion Lane to the glory of God and in thanksgiving for the Victory at Waterloo. Its bell no doubt sounded to greet Queen Victoria when she made her first journey to Windsor in August 1837, and was cheered by the children as she passed Theresa Terrace.'

The Revd Robert Bewsher writing in the Parish Magazine 1961

The new Bishop of London, Charles Blomfield, performed the dedication ceremony, during which he presented the church with Communion plate comprising a large flagon, a chalice and two plates, “*all of silver of massy and handsome workmanship*”. Of these, the flagon and one of the plates still exist, the plate being one of those used for collections every Sunday.

“The Vicar of Fulham presented the large Bible and Prayer Book and Books for the altar, all handsomely bound in purple morocco. Miss Howard, of Hammersmith, gave the two gilt chairs at the altar and two damask cloth napkins.” **Faulkner's History 1839**

In 1831 the Revd George Chisholm became curate of St Peter's Chapel on the nomination of the Vicar of Fulham. In 1834 St Peter's was, by an Act of Parliament separated from Fulham and made into a district parish. The patronage of the living was transferred to the Bishop of London and the Revd. George Chisholm became the first incumbent on its separation from St Paul's, Hammersmith. He continued as vicar until his death in March 1854.

'A landmark in the local government of Hammersmith occurred in 1834 when it was divided from the Parish of Fulham for civil and ecclesiastical purposes, including the control of its own charities in land and money. [St Peter's] was made a Chapel of Ease to St Paul's Parish Church instead of to Fulham. The first perambulation of the parish boundaries after the separation of Hammersmith from Fulham took place on Ascension Day, 1834, in the presence of the Vicar, the parish officers and many inhabitants. The Latymer Foundation Scholars also assisted at such perambulations'.

'A History of Hammersmith' Edited by P. D Whiting 1965

The Interior

It is apparent from archival evidence that the original interior was, to say the least, somewhat spartan, the emphasis being on its capacity to provide seating for 1,600 worshippers. The flat, compartmented ceiling was quite an achievement, covering as it does an area 85ft long by 65ft wide. The large span may be more readily grasped if you consider the floor area.

My Dear Friends,

You have shown me so much kindness heretofore, that I venture to ask yet again for your kindly help.

As many of you were not resident here in the early years of my incumbency, I may mention certain matters, which may be of some interest. On my induction here I found a Church with high pews, without Chancel or Choir Stalls, without Lectern, Credence Table or Sedilia; with the altar and its furniture shabby and undignified; a very poor organ and no regular choir. The Church has now been put through repairs, re-warmed and re-furnished and the organ has been rebuilt; at a cost in all of about £2,100...

Letter to Parishioners requesting funds. The Revd G.H. Tidcombe 1888

The original furnishings were typical of the time. At the eastern end a wooden reredos was rendered as false marble featuring a central panel that carried the Ten Commandments and had panels either side which were set out with the Lord's Prayer and Creed. A simple altar, a pair of octagonal pulpits and a plain reading desk made of oak comprised the only furniture. The interior paintwork was distempered white, the columns 'an unhappy ochre colour'. Lighting the church must have been a great problem in the winter months until gas was installed in the 1850's.

'It is with deep regret that I perceive that numbers who attend regularly in the mornings, absent themselves altogether from the evening services of our Church. The bad arrangement of the gas apparatus is usually assigned by those who occupy the galleries as the reason for non-attendance. In order that no such excuse should be made in future, the central light has been entirely re-modelled at considerable cost, and raised some three feet, that it may not distress the eye. Five additional coronals have been added so as to disperse the light and lessen the heat of the main chandelier. The alterations are now complete, the result most satisfactory, and I do hope to see the pews in the galleries now full in the evenings as well as the mornings.'

The Revd Thomas Arundell Tagg

Jan 1857

The simple and logical layout of the interior was not likely to remain in favour with the more elaborate taste of the Victorians, and in 1875 plans were drawn up for significant alterations inside the church. The Bishop of Kensington himself took a hand in this, suggesting the most suitable new position for the pulpit. This was the project that resulted in the raising and paving of the chancel floor and the provision of choir stalls, altar rails, pulpit, font and new pews throughout the

main body of the church. The black and white marble steps at the chancel were provided at a later time.

"Taken as a whole this church presents a very fair specimen of modern Grecian architecture. The tower is of considerable merit. The design is novel and pleasing and the proportions are harmonious. The interior, however, is chaste and formal, displaying even a Presbyterian nakedness, the dullness of which is increased by the purple furniture of the altar. ...Its coldness may suit the heartless school of the philosopher but it chills the fervour of the devotion of the Christian."

'The Gentleman's Magazine' 1831

In 1887 the interior of the church was cleaned and repainted under the advice of William Morris who resided locally at Kelmscott House on Hammersmith Mall. In the same year the old, high-sided pews that filled the body of the church were removed and replaced with more modern seating. New heating was installed and the roof mended.

In 1899 the Revd G. H. Tidcombe died after 31 years as vicar of St Peter's, and his successor, Mr Clementson, took little time in making his presence felt within the church community. It was shortly after his arrival the long affair of the decoration of the wall above the reredos began. In the meantime the wrought iron gates and screen, which enclose the choir, were designed and set up by Whippels of Exeter. The ironwork was provided by Mr Harry Sutherland in memory of his parents.

In 1901 Sir William Richmond, K.C.V.O., a prominent member of the Royal Academy and local resident, was invited by parishioners to prepare a scheme of decoration to transform St Peter's Church.

It was at about this time that both the clergy and choir vestries were enlarged, (although by 1920 the choir vestry extension had been claimed back again in order to build St George's Chapel as a war memorial).

Richmond had still not carried out his scheme of decoration when, in 1905, Henry Bull died. H.J.H. Bull, a member of the well-known local family had been a churchwarden at St Peter's for thirteen years. His family and the congregation decided to provide a memorial to him. This took the form of an oak reredos designed by Gerald Horsley. The intention was to improve the architectural framework of the church and it was designed to fit in with the proposed layout of Sir William Richmond's murals. These were not forthcoming, and in 1909 the church community lost patience and an enquiry was started so that the decorations could be started by another means. These were done the following year as a memorial to Miss Mary Sutherland. The round-headed mural panels, with their roundels above, were painted by Henry Murray and are dated 1911.

"At one time the living of St Peter's was worth between £800 and £1,000 a year. People took a five-guinea pew and two guineas' worth of seats for their servants in the galleries. At one time it was rather Evangelical in tone, and people objected to the Cross on the Tower, but the Rev. G. H. Tidcombe told me - with a droop of his left eye - that he quieted their consciences by assuring them that he had been told by an expert, lately deceased, that it was meant for the Sword of St Peter."

'Memories of St Peter's' by the Rt. Hon William Bull.

Sir,

As a constant reader of your paper, I am surprised that no notice has been taken of the spread of Ritualism in our district of St Peter's. The Church is being quite transmogrified, and we parishioners do not know what is coming next. It has leaked out that a grand festival is to be held on St Michael's day (a favourite day with Ritualists); surpliced choir, grand altars, candles, crosses, are all, we hear, ready. I suppose some of the law-breaking clergy will be there to support the vicar in his unlawful deeds. We have not now a single Protestant Church in the neighbourhood.

St Paul's, St John's, St Nicholas', St Michael's are all Mass-houses*. St Peter's was once a grand exception; now it is trying to excel its neighbours.

[*And as if there were not enough already, Bishop Jackson has just added another.]

A PROTESTANT September 15th 1876

THE DECORATION OF ST PETER'S

SIR WILLIAM RICHMOND PROPOUNDS A SCHEME AND MAKES A GENEROUS OFFER.

'On Friday evening last, acting upon a notice circulated by the Vicar, the Rev J. S. Clementson, the parishioners of St Peter's, Hammersmith, met in the day schools attached to the church, to hear and consider a scheme for the internal decoration of their place of worship. The Vicar himself presided...and in opening the proceedings, explained that...he had ventured to consult Sir William Richmond on the point [with regard to the condition of the decoration of St Peter's]. Sir William Richmond was received with applause, before proceeding to speak about the decoration of St Peter's Church.

Sir William said he did not propose to cover the whole church with designs, because there were not the funds to do that. Neither did he propose to adorn [it] as he had adorned several parts of St Paul's...but what he wanted to do was make it...lively in colour instead of deadly. It must seem to [the parishioners] a rather amazing statement but he thought that in London, for the interior of a building which was not going to be decorated in sumptuous colour, there would be no colour so beautiful as white. ...Not a white which was a degraded white, but a white which was snow-white - as white as anything could make it. Because when the light struck through the windows and reflected and refracted, that reflection and refraction upon a white made innumerable tints. The capitals of the columns he should gild and then upon the east end he had proposed...to defray the costs himself. Behind the altar, and in all the part which was...the east end he should place a curtain embroidered in some sort of fashion with gold upon yellow with white. Upon the two spandrels, which occupied the spaces above the windows, he proposed to paint some subject, which he had not yet considered...There was a little difficulty, and that was that an altarpiece had been painted...by an artist who was now

dead and that [it] should be treated with the greatest possible respect...and he had found a place for the painting upon the gallery underneath the organ.'

Extract from a local paper 1901



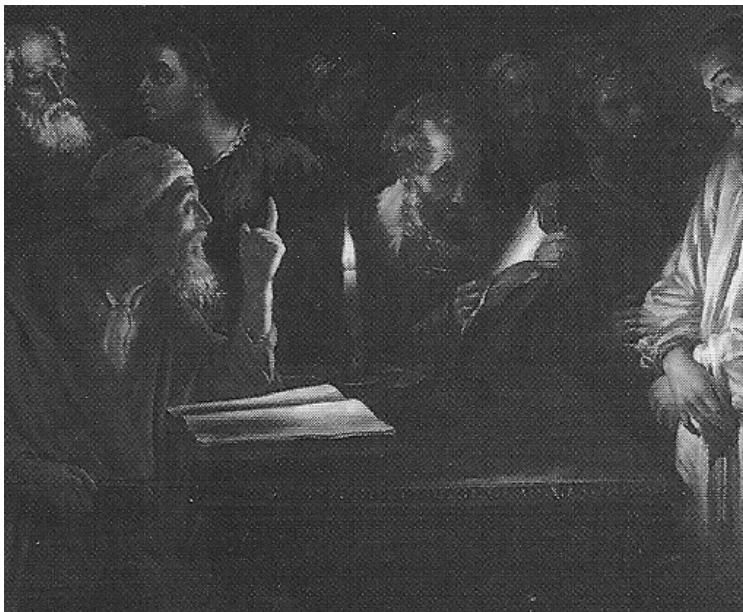
" Now Ladies and Gentlemen, do let us buck up! I know perfectly well that the air, the atmosphere of this delightful Thames and the low lying country around it's reaches is a tiny little bit enervating, and that sometimes parishes so annexed to the river are apt to lie low. In this instance let us all stand by one another, and let us say that we will get the Vicar, if it is necessary, eight hundred pounds. Why shouldn't we do it? It really is very easy: a little trouble from everybody and we'll get the money, and if, after that, you tell me you are dissatisfied with what I have done to your Church – well there it is!"

Extract from a lecture given by Sir William Blake Richmond at St Peter's Church in 1903.

Sir William Blake Richmond by George Phoenix 1897

The East Window

The stained glass window in the east wall was designed and made by Clayton and Bell. It features the Risen Christ accompanied by cherubs and watched by disciples. The inscription on the ribbon scroll reads "Ye men of Galilee why stand ye gazing". The window was presented by Mr Goodwin in 1868 in memory of his grandson who was drowned nearby.



It was planned that the window be surrounded by four panels designed and painted by Sir William Richmond. At the time that Richmond drew up his plans a fine painting of 'Christ before Caiaphas' by Reuben T.W. Sayers formed the reredos. Sayers lived at 1, St Peter's Square and died in 1873. The painting was removed to the front of the west gallery and subsequently returned to the artist's family. In 1902 it was taken to another St Peter's Church in Hever, Kent.

The Murals

Perhaps some of the most visually striking features of St Peter's Church are the murals, which cover the east wall above the galleries. They depict Saint Peter being called by Jesus and the apostle preaching in Rome on the day of Pentecost. These are the most recent additions to the decorations of the church and were painted in 1932. They were a gift from the Revd. Harold Henderson (curate) and were dedicated to Stanley and Oliver Burgess. The murals were painted by Miss Hardmann and Miss Cohen, friends who had studied together at the Royal Academy. The murals were apparently a mystery to the late Revd Robert Foxcroft, who reportedly said that all he knew about them was that they "had been painted by two Jewish girls from Chelsea".

An edition of **St Peter's Parish Magazine** from 1957 reports the following account of a visit and lecture by Winifred Hardmann:

'Listening to Miss Hardmann talk was most interesting. She went back to the days when she and Miss Cohen were given the commission and had to work out a design. Every mural painted has to take into consideration the scale of the surrounding architecture and has a space to fill.

In this case the space was oblong with the lower edge running up to the wall on either side, making an uneven shape. Miss Hardmann spoke of the difficulties of this shape and of their wish to show the whole figure of Christ, not losing the feet, so that the whole figure would be seen from the central aisle of the church. This difficulty was overcome by massing some rocks for the figure of Christ to stand on, (as seen in the left-hand mural).... There was much thought given to the head of Christ and many drawings were made and discarded.

One day the artists were in a small restaurant and saw just the right type of head..."with the right bones". Nothing daunted these two painters so they made enquiries and were able to get this man, who was a Greek Cypriot, to come to their studio and pose for them.

The old Pharisee in the right hand mural (the one bending forward and smiling) was from a study of the curator of the Royal Academy School at the time they were students there in 1920.

The hill village in the left hand mural was from a quick study made when a small Italian train taking them to Assisi stopped for the driver to have a meal, so while he was away they got out on to the platform and made a most useful study.

Another head amongst the figures depicted was from Brother Peter of the Society of the Resurrection of Australia, known as the 'Bush Brothers'. Another head is based on that of Sir George Clausen, Professor at the Royal Academy. [It was he who unveiled the murals in 1934 after two years work by Miss Hardmann and Miss Cohen]

The Pulpit

Many alterations to the pulpit arrangements have been made over the years. In 1829, in accordance with the fashion for those days, two wooden pulpits of equal height were installed, one to serve as a reading desk, the other as a pulpit. In about 1863 these pulpits were dismantled and a much larger pulpit was erected in the centre of the church, almost completely hiding the small

altar behind it. This new pulpit was in fact constructed by surrounding one of the old pulpits with a circular staircase. A small landing half way up the staircase formed the platform for a reading desk.

'Neither seat nor fixed kneeler was provided for the reader in this singular erection. Did he feel wearied with much standing, the reader's only resting place being the stairs?'

There was a further disadvantage with the design of the new pulpit. The unusual breadth of the structure left only a small passage between the staircase and the pews.

'After every wedding therefore, unless the bride and bridegroom chose to pass almost unnoticed under the gallery by the north or south aisle, they who had just been joined together were of necessity separated from each other so they could process out of the church.'

A stone pulpit is now to be seen on the south side of the chancel, *'...at a cost of some £70, having been in great measure defrayed by penny offerings.'*

The Font

The stone font was moved from its original position at the back of the church when the parish rooms were constructed over 35 years ago. It is now sited in the middle, beside the southern aisle and is frequently in use for baptisms.

The Lectern

The carved Eagle Lectern was presented to St Peter's Church by the then churchwarden Major C. E. A. Cotes RA. It was erected in the memory of his nephew.

'Many persons in Hammersmith will hear with great regret of the death, in India, at the early age of 31, of the reverend Digby Henry Cotes, formerly curate of St Peter's ...he had worked [in India] for about four and a half years. Many in St Peter's will remember his earnest and faithful devotion to his work in the church, and among the poor, and in the schools of the Parish.'

(Extract from a local newspaper. July 1878)

It is inscribed "To the Glory of God. In loving memory of Digby H Cotes, formerly curate of St Peter's and late Assistant Chaplain, Bombay establishment, at rest Kurrachee. 10th July 1878"

Kurrachee (or Karachi) was a small seaport in Sind, a Province of India, annexed by the British in the 1840's.

The Chapel of St George

This chapel was dedicated on 28th November 1920. It is enclosed in a wrought iron screen and is often referred to as the 'Lady Chapel'. The chapel was dedicated to those who fought and died in the First World War and the inscription on the wall of the Sanctuary reads 'Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friend'. The oil painting over the altar is of the Annunciation. Field-Marshal Viscount Montgomery (1887-1976) was amongst those present at the dedication ceremony.

The Parish Rooms

In about 1912 a house was acquired in St Peter's Square, for use in various church activities. When, about fifteen years later, the house was sold, the proceeds were invested and formed the nucleus of the fund eventually used in the 1970s to create the present parish rooms within the church.

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GREAT BELL OF WESTMINSTER.
Weight 13 tons, 16 cwt., 3 qrs., 13 lbs.
The largest ever cast in London.

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Weight 11 tons, 11 cwt.
The largest ever shipped.

"GREAT PETER," OF YORK MINSTER.
Weight 10 tons, 13 cwt.
This was for some time the largest bell in England.

"GREAT TOM," OF LINCOLN CATHEDRAL.
Weight 5 tons, 8 cwt.
Its predecessor was a ton lighter. Heard when first erected 13 miles off.

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON. "THE CLOCK BELLS."
Weight of Hour Bell, 5 tons.
Erected 1709 and still in use.

PORTSMOUTH TOWN HALL.
Hour Bell weight 4 tons, and 4 Quarter Bells.

"ST. DUNSTON," OF CANTERBURY.
Weight 3 tons, 10 cwt.
Cast in the Cathedral precincts.

"BOW BELLS," CHEAPSIDE, LONDON.
Cast 1735, replacing one of 1669.
The peal of 10 bells was first rung at the birthday of George III.,
June 4th, 1762.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY.
Tenor, weight 24 cwt.

OSBORNE HOUSE, ISLE OF WIGHT.
3 Clock Bells for H.R.H. Prince Consort.

(For List of Peals see Pages 23 to 52.)

The Bells

When built, St Peter's Church was equipped with a single bell cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry and inscribed 'Edward Mears fecit, London 1828'. In 1916, four further bells were cast by Mears and Stainbank to provide a ring of five. Three of these bells were given as a memorial to Dr Frederick Lawrance, churchwarden and resident of St Peter's Square. The fourth bell appears to have been donated by the parish as it carries the name J.S. Clementson as incumbent and Charles Vincent as warden. This bell also records that all four bells were cast "*during the Great War, which began on 4th August 1914*". The bells are hung on beams and chimed by pulling a series of cords that lead down to a frame in the

porch. Few tunes are possible with a ring of five, and often ringers play the hymn "Now the Day is Over". According to our experts a sixth bell would really open new horizons.

Old Peter Calls

**Old Peter has no chime
To mark the end of time.
It strikes a single bell
That wishes all men well.
It bids you never shirk
Your worship or your work.
Today for help it calls,
"Please mend my roof and walls!"**

'Old Peter' as some who live in the lane call the Church clock, has marked the passing hours for as long as they can remember. In the fiercest blitz its note came as a welcome assurance that St Peter's church still stood and those within its walls were safe. Windows beneath it were broken, slates were shattered, but the main fabric of the building remained unharmed and our worship never faltered; though sometimes services that started in the church were finished in the crypt.

Now could 'Old Peter' speak it would tell a mournful tale. Just over a year ago it was discovered that the church roof, containing some of the longest rafters known, was gradually being destroyed by an insidious and unpredictable foe. Technical words like 'Coriophora cerabella' which occur in the expert's report on these 54ft long rafters, describe a condition akin to dry rot and suggest the possibility that when they were cut from lofty Baltic pines in 1825, they bore within themselves the seeds of their own decay.'

An extract from a leaflet by the Revd Robert Bewsher for the St Peter's Repair Fund. c1949

The Clock

The tower also contains a splendid clock made by Thwaites and Reed and dated 1862. It has a pendulum action on a two-second dead beat escapement. The main wheels are 14 inches in diameter. There is a striking mechanism for hours only on the second bell in the tower. The dials on the copper sheet are over two metres in diameter and there is a one and a half hundredweight striking mechanism weight which requires winding on a weekly basis. Thwaites and Reed continue to service the clock annually.

The Organ

The organ is sited in the west gallery and was originally built by Bates & Son in 1854. It was enlarged in 1885. It has tracker action (a significant fact for those

'in the know' about organs), two manuals and pedals. The organ is electrically blown and has 24 ranks of pipes. It was originally installed at a cost of £230 and was first played on 21st September 1856.

When St Peter's church was consecrated in 1829 the choirmaster led the singing using a large harmonium. Following that, in the 1850's, a rented organ was used until a permanent one could be installed.

In October 1876 the Church Times reported that a harvest thanksgiving service had taken place, which marked a new development in the '*conduct of the services in the church*'. The services had for some time before been '*chorally rendered*', although the writer lamented the fact that the choir had been put up in an out-of-the-way organ gallery. On this occasion however the twenty-four members of the choir took up their places (all wearing white surplices) within the chancel. The organ had been placed there too. '*Much to the improvement, not only of the service, but fabric also.*'

By the end of the nineteenth century, whilst other works were taking place in the church, someone had the good idea of doing some fundraising in order to upgrade the organ.

'The bazaar was in the Old English style and its object, given in that dialect, may be translated as follows: "The organ was old and much decayed, so that the choir could sometimes with much difficulty sing, for the sounds thereof were very far from right in many stops and keys. So the wise Dr Steggall did advise to build a new organ anew, and to add thereto much that was lacking."

An Organ Fund Bazaar was held at the St Peter's Boys School in King Street to raise money for the project. Sir Andrew Fairburn MP, an old college friend of Rev Tidcombe opened the bazaar. At the end of his speech he said that "...knowing there were dangerous pickpockets about, he advised them to empty their pockets at the stalls and then they would have no fear of light fingered gentry"

'By the advice of a competent authority it has been determined to reconstruct the organ, using the old metal pipes, and adding pedal pipes of larger construction, and additional bass pipes to several of the stops, in order to give greater solidity and power of tone. It is also proposed to add two or three stops of bright clear tone, which will greatly help in leading the singing of the choir and congregation'.

(Extract from an article in West London Observer 1883)

The organ was rebuilt in 1884 by Messrs Bryceson Brothers of Charlton Works, Islington. The price, including a new and handsome Grecian case, was £350. Much of the old piping was used in the construction, as a completely new organ would have cost in the region of £800.

'As it was communion Sunday when we paid a visit, it ought to be noticed that the communion plate was the same as used from the consecration of the Church and presented

by Bishop Blomfield. It was engraved 'St Peter, Fulham' and is a very handsome set, consisting of flagon, cup and two plates, all silver and valued at £200.

The organ in the west gallery by Bates & Son, is not a large one, but has sweet tones. It is played by Mr Perks, who is surrounded by a goodly number of youths and young ladies who form the choir. There are some very sweet voices of both sexes, and as a whole are well trained in harmony. The music in the morning service is plain song and in the evening, choral.'

Suburban Press. August 1872

The Communion Plate

In 1882 the St Peter's Magazine reported that the chalices given to the Church on the day of Consecration had been re-made by Messrs. Barkentin and Krall of Regent Street. They were offered and dedicated on the Feast of Epiphany that year. The original 1829 inscription from Bishop Blomfield had been retained, although the remainder of the silver chalices were beaten, re-polished and lacquered. The cost of this exercise was £35 (less a discount of thirty shillings for 'ready money').

'The chalices belonging to the Church, which had been remade by Messrs. Barkentin and Krall of Regent Street, goldsmiths and metal workers, at a cost of £35 (less discount for ready money 30s) were solemnly offered and dedicated on the Feast of Epiphany. The chalices are of purest silver possible and are beaten out and made entirely by hand, each chalice being in three parts. The old inscription has been retained given by Bishop Blomfield in 1829.'

St Peter's Magazine Nov 1892

A letter to the Revd Tidcombe:

Stanhope Street, Mayfair
10th October 1887

Dear Sir,

I have this day bought for St Peter's Church a plain Latin Cross, having heard from members of the Congregation and from our people's worthy Churchwarden that no other cross would be recognised by you. I heard that a subscription had been proposed to present the Church with one. Knowing well that it was very difficult to procure such a Cross as you wanted, I made it my business to get one.

Please to accept the same with my best wishes.

Yours faithfully

J.J. Mason Esq.

The Crypt

'During the last war, while our services were maintained without intermission, the vestry became a school and the north porch a fire-watcher's post. The crypt was an air raid shelter by night and sometimes a chapel by day'.

The Revd Robert Bewsher 1961

The London Metropolitan Archive lists a few coffins found in the crypt. They are no longer there having been moved some years ago and reburied in St Paul's graveyard. They belonged to Joseph Goodwin d.1833, Anne Dounes d.1837, Frederick Littledale d.1837, Mary Anne Tiebart d.1840, the Revd. A Battishull Parrin d.1850, Ann Goodwin d.1850 and Catherine Youens d.1851.

New sewers and water mains were built to cope with the rapid expansion of the population in Hammersmith in the first half of the 19th Century. However, by 1853 the problem of providing safe drinking water had become serious enough for a local order to be made, in the interests of public health, ordering burials in the vaults and grounds of St Peter's to cease.

'In 1814 Mr E. Millwood, a bricklayer, was employed in repairing the tiling of some cottages belonging to Mr Moreing, opposite Stamford Brook Lane, discovered under the tiling, a coffin which, on being opened, was found to contain the body of a child, in a dry and decayed state. The inscription was as follows; Edward Manley Powell Pryce Esq. only son and heir of Sir Edward Manley Pryce of Newton House, Montgomery, Bart. Died 28th April 1728 aged 5 ½ years. An inquest was held when it satisfactorily appeared that the body had been delivered to the late Mr Moreing, undertaker, by the grandfather of the deceased, with a request that he would take charge of the body until it should be in the power of the friends to remove it, with that degree of funereal splendour which they flattered themselves with the hope of being one day able to bestow upon it.

From the time of the decease [of Mr Moreing] therefore, the body had remained in the possession of Mrs Moreing, who, refusing to take further charge of it, the Vicar and Churchwardens ordered it to be deposited in a vault in [St Peter's] Church, that the friends of the family might have the option of removal.'

Faulkner's History 1839

The Graveyard

When the new Great West Road was built in 1957 St Peter's Church inevitably lost a large portion of its land, including that containing graves. These were moved to St Paul's Church in the centre of Hammersmith. There is one headstone left on the south side of the church and thirty remaining on the north side. All inscriptions are indecipherable, save the one on the south side.

In 1958 the remaining portion of the churchyard was laid out as a garden of rest. A statue by Karel Vogel was erected to the southwest in 1959.



St Peter's Challenge Appeal

In February 2001 an ambitious appeal was launched to restore the crumbling stonework and the great roof of St Peter's Church which had been damaged over the years through regular ingress of water. The target was £500,000 and the deadline was December 2003. Very generous

personal donations were made throughout the Challenge Appeal and a successful bid for money from The Lottery Heritage Fund together with many, many local fundraising events meant that the money was raised in time. The work was completed by June 2004. The church is now watertight, has newly enamelled clock faces and has been saved for the future.

"It is clear to the Upper Room Project what a key role St Peter's plays in the broader community of Hammersmith and West London in general. Links with schools, residents associations and local charities, such as the Upper Room Project, indicate a church community that sees a key role for itself in building relationships and helping to exert a meaningful and helpful influence on the life of the area at large."

The Revd. David Matthews, Project Manager of the Upper Room,

"We absolutely rely on the church as a rehearsal and performance space – in which capacity it is both fine and versatile: the acoustic is perfect for choral music and the organ excellent. These factors have enabled us to perform a variety of music at concerts at the church. The fact that St Peter's Singers has grown in expertise, in musical aptitude and in numbers is directly due to having such a welcoming, friendly and flexible space in which to practise week by week."

Mr Michael Emery, Conductor

"St Peter's Church is one of Mildmay's most dedicated supporters and has been there for us in some very difficult times. Your support has provided some precious memories for the staff and children here at the Mildmay Nursery."

Marion Munn, Community Fundraiser,

Mildmay Mission Hospital (HIV and Aids Care and Training) Hackney

"I should like to place on record our gratitude for the use of St Peter's parish rooms in order to run our Brownie Pack. We now have a full pack of 7-11 year olds attending from a wide range of local schools and backgrounds. Without St Peter's as our meeting place we would probably have had to close the pack down, as there is minimal accommodation for such activities in the local area. This would be a real loss to the children in the local community."

Mrs Bridget Stevenson, Brown Owl, 15 Hammersmith Brownie Pack

"I was baptised here, I was married here, my children were baptised here and I buried my husband from here. St Peter's is my life and I love every square inch of it."

Mrs Daphne Pratt, parishioner

St Peter's still stands, signifying, for me, something
permanent in the midst of change.
It stands here a testimony to a bygone age, but also
today a testimony to God.
For here, as on the day it was consecrated, abides
the same faith in God.
Our thanksgivings go up to Heaven for what this
church is and what it has been.

Bishop of Kensington 1954