

THE BEGINNINGS OF ST PETER'S CHURCH

Before St Peter's was built

In about 1750, the Calverley Mill was built giving this area the name of Windmill Fields. After John Ward bought the land in 1825, he built an area of small dwellings with minimal water supply and sanitation. This small area, bounded by Prospect Road, Bayhall Road, Park Street and Windmill Street, contained a dairy, forge and general store. The people living there met for worship, first in a cottage and then in the new infants' school in North Street. As numbers grew, they moved into the newly built St Peter's School, thus forming a congregation ready for when St Peter's Church was built in 1875.



The area of Windmill Fields in 1867

The North Street hall

In the mid-19th century, Holy Trinity Church (now Trinity Theatre) built an infant school in North Street for the inhabitants of Windmill Fields to which a larger hall was added in 1869. After the Education Act of 1880 made education compulsory, plans for a new school were drawn up. The hall then continued to be used by the school for dinners and indoor games and as a parish room for the church.



Calverley Mill gave the area its name of Windmill Fields



FOUNDATION STONE & CONSECRATION

Kent and Sussex Courier account of the laying of the foundation stone for St Peter's Church.

Windmill Fields is a suburb of Tunbridge Wells which of late years has gone on increasing in size until it has now a large population. Some fifteen years ago the Reverend Canon Hoare and the congregation of Trinity Church erected a school room in the locality in which service was held every Sunday evening, but this room became too small and four or five years ago a larger room was added and this room is not adequate for the accommodation of the congregation. The site of the proposed new church is on the St Mary's Hill Estate at a point opposite the road leading to Hall's Hole. The building which is to be constructed of native stone with tiled roof and traceried windows with bath stone dressings, is after the decorative style of architecture... The extreme length of the new church will be 92 feet, the dimensions of the nave being 72 feet by 32 feet and the chancel 25 feet by 17 feet and when finished it is expected that it will seat about 450 persons. The design is such that aisles may be added on either side when they become necessary...

John Deacon, Esq, of Mabledon, the patron of the living of Trinity parish, laid the foundation stone, and in the course of a brief address pointed out the great increase which had taken place in the church accommodation in the parish of Tonbridge during the last fifty years. The great desire of the Committee was to erect the church for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The Rev Canon Hoare also spoke, and traced the course of events which had taken (place) during the last fifteen years in the hamlet of Windmill Fields. He said that when they had completed the church, they should not have to look for a congregation as there was one already found, and he had reason to believe that there were many then before him who had realised the benefits of true religion by attending the services in the schoolroom at Windmill Fields.

Kent and Sussex Courier, Friday 31st July 1874

Consecration of the church

On 30th July 1874, a service for laying the foundation stone was held by a Patron of Holy Trinity during which Canon Hoare spoke of how they would not need to search for a congregation as there were people already meeting for worship in the school buildings.

The following year the church was consecrated on 4th October 1875 as a daughter church of Holy Trinity and given its own parish.

Originally the church worship area (the 'nave') was the size you see now; the hall on the north side was added in 1889 when the existing building became too small for an increasing congregation.

A generous Christian family

Brenton Halliburton Collins (1828-1924), the son of a Canadian banker and owner of Dunorlan, was a trustee and warden of St Peter's Church in its early years. He was generous in his support, paying for the chancel window and contributing towards the construction of the north aisle in 1889.

His son, Carteret Collins, attended both St Peter's and the Congregational Church in Hawkenbury, laying the foundation stone for that church. It was he who paid for the recreation ground in Hawkenbury to be used by the two churches.



B H Collins and his family

PHOTO CREDIT: THE AMELIA CENTRE, WITH THANKS



EDUCATION AND THE YOUNG CHURCH

St Peter's Schools and compulsory education

Although some children had attended the school in North Street, an 1880 Act of Parliament made education compulsory for all children aged 5 to 10.

St Peter's School was originally built to take the boys in the single storey on the right of the building. The headmaster at that time was Mr Oaten. Average attendance in 1892 was 143 out of a total roll of 156.

The girls and infants were in the double storey on the left of the building with average attendances of 49 girls

and 118 infants out of a school roll of 300 in 1892. Even with low attendance these children must have been crammed together since, 100 years later, the entire school held a maximum of 120 children.

For most children, St Peter's would be the only school they attended. The school leaving age was soon raised to 11 and then to 12 or 13 in 1899. Only after World War I was it raised to 14.

Both schools were amalgamated under Mr Oaten before WWI.

St Peter's School children in 1902



A photo of a typical Victorian working-class family, probably taken during the late 1890s. This particular family were shop workers and the father was a railway office worker.



THE MISSION HALL * THE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

The Mission Hall

The distance from Hawkenbury to St Peter's Church was about a mile, so in 1892 the Mission Hall (often referred to as "The Tin Church") was built on Forest Road for local services, Sunday School and other church meetings.

Before developing the north aisle of the church, Sunday School continued at the Mission Hall until the 1970s along with various midweek meetings for adults and children, including a Guide Company and Brownie Pack. The last event there was a wedding reception for David Archer, a member of the youth group.

In the early 1970s, the Mission Hall was sold to raise money for the north aisle development at church and two houses, 77 and 77a Forest Road, were built on the site.



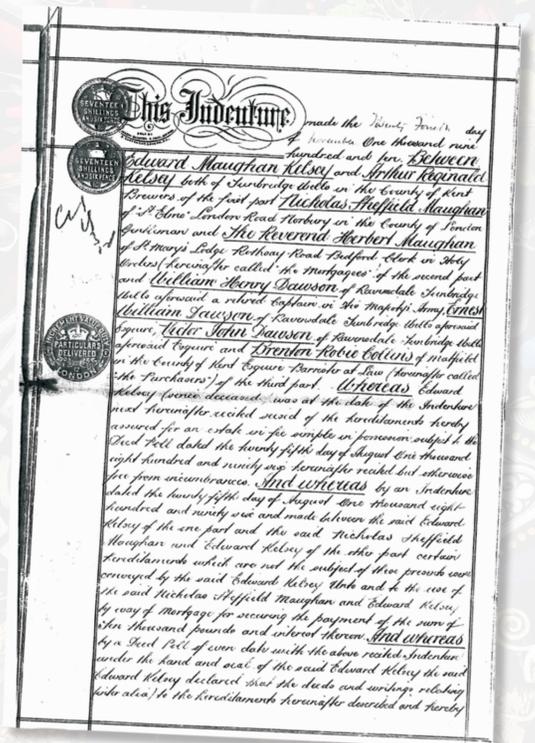
Books and cards awarded to the Fry children from Sunday School, 1918-1927

The school playground

Only the infant children had their own tiny playground before 1910. In 1969 an elderly man, Mr Vidler, recalled how, as a boy at St Peter's, the older children would have to run round St Peter's Street and Windmill Street at breaktime.

In 1910 Captain Dawson, a member of the Church PCC, offered to buy a piece of ground as a suitable place for school children to practice drill and marching skills, a common recreation for children with little or no gym equipment. The area opposite the church was chosen and bought. (The site on which Spire Court apartments have now been built.)

At one time the playground was opened for the use of children out of school hours. However, according to an article in St Peter's magazine in September 1912, "The result was far from satisfactory. The playground has been chiefly used by lads who have left school and who ought to be at work. Children have been afraid to use the ground because of the rough play in which some of these boys engaged and the neighbours have been annoyed by boys climbing on to the wall of the playground overlooking their back garden... Without someone in charge to see the rules are observed, more harm than good is the result...". Hence the Church PCC decided the playground should be locked up again.



The original deed covering purchase of the land for a school playground



MEMORIES FROM THE 1960s

Elizabeth Akehurst remembers teenage activities

When I first came to St Peter's youth group, we met weekly in the North Street hall or Dunorlan for games followed by a short talk led by Mr Campbell, the curate.

Occasionally, we went to London for a Christian youth rally and visit to a museum, but most Bank Holidays we had a hike; perhaps to keep us from joining the Mods and Rockers who shocked the nation with their fights and damage to coastal towns! On one such hike, I lost my purse; in the middle of a field, Mr Campbell prayed, then we found it. When he returned to St Peter's 40 years later for Mrs Hurst's funeral the first thing he said was, "Do you remember losing your purse?"

One winter, 7 or 8 of us had confirmation classes at the vicarage on Sunday afternoons where we were invited to stay for afternoon tea before evening church. As there were no facilities for serving hot drinks in the church, all those at the evening service were invited back to the vicarage (then on Prospect Road) for refreshments and an informal Bible study.



Rev Hurst had a way of involving adults, especially the men, in informal hockey matches. For those of us watching on Boxing Day morning in 1962, it was icy cold; that afternoon, snow fell and lay for about 2 months!

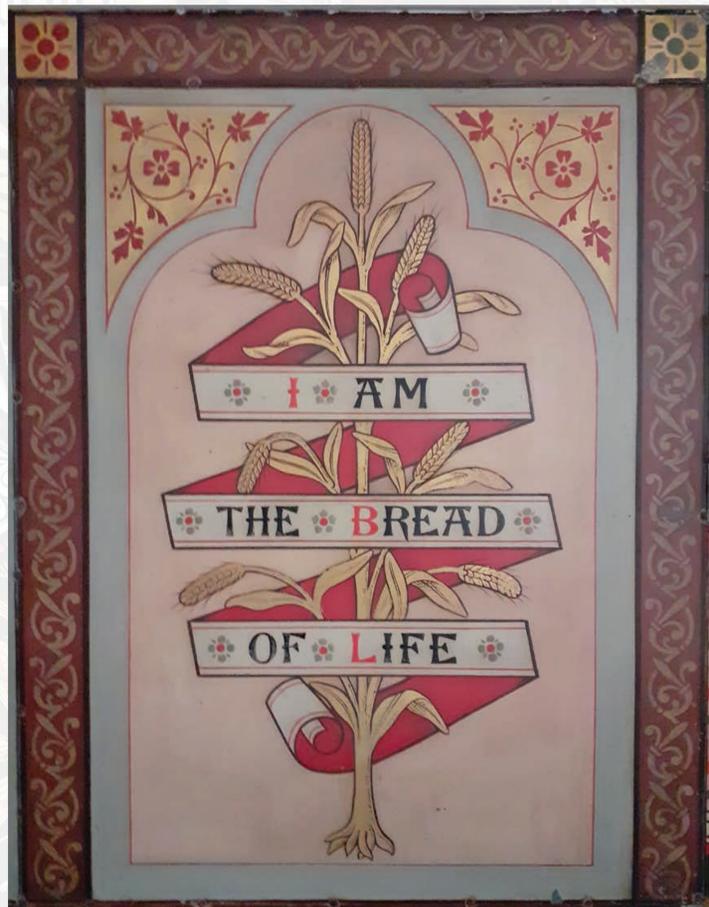
Elizabeth Akehurst

David Arscott remembers being a young boy at church

I remember the choir with their huge maroon hats that looked like cushions. At the evening service the north aisle was unlit and just disappeared into the gloom. The verses painted on the walls have stayed with me for life.

I remember being very proud when my sister read the lesson once. I thought you would have to be someone very special to do that. I thought it odd that they had communion after the main service. I felt it was a friendly church.

The verses are still there
– this is one of them



THE SCHOOL MOVE * ST PETER'S YOUTH

St Peter's School moves to Hollyfields, Hawkenbury

Long before the school moved to Hollyfields in 2021, it had become clear that a larger site was needed. The Windmill Street site had only 5 classrooms for 7 school years with a separate hall (North Street) for lunch and separate playground. There had been several attempts to relocate, first at the events field in Dunorlan (then used for cow pasture) and secondly at part of the old Land Registry site. Eventually, the present site in Hawkenbury was chosen and the new school opened in 2021.

Church and school connections

There have been close links between the school and church over many years and, despite the physical distance between the two since the move, the school continues to have a strong connection with the church. The Thursday Act of Worship held at the school is led by either the Assistant Minister or a member of Crossteach, a Christian charity that shares the Christian faith in schools. The school also continues to have services in the church, including at harvest, Christmas and Easter, to which parents are invited.

Historically, Bibles were presented to the leavers each summer term, but more recently they have been given to pupils joining Year 2 so they can be used throughout their time in Years 2-6.



The 'fit for purpose' new school building

Youth and children's work at the church

We have fun-filled, God-centred, age-specific groups on Sundays for children of all ages. Our children's and youth activities don't stop there. Social events are organised throughout the year, including barbecues, ice skating, games nights and chip shop surveys!



Climbers on a Sunday morning, two SPY members chill and St Peter's Youth (SPY) and Christian Youth (CY) groups combine for SPYCY fun and games events

Memories from a university student

My name is Jess, and I am at Durham University, where I am part of the Christian Union and am settled at a church. I am massively grateful for having the opportunity to go to Climbers, SPY and CY. Looking back, those groups provided a strong foundation of biblical understanding, and always encouraged and supported me in my faith. We were also very fortunate that our leaders would organise lots of fun times together, such as weekends away camping at Oak Hall, trips to the aqua park at Bewl Water as well as ice-skating at Somerset House. We would also meet for BBQs regularly in the summer, which were always welcoming to any newcomers or friends that we wanted to bring.



THE WAR YEARS * WORLD WAR I

WORLD WAR I : 1914-1918

WWI and St Peter's parish

At the beginning of World War I a popular idea was to form pals battalions, which were made up of men from within the same town or area and with similar interests or jobs – Albert West was probably a member of one of these. A son of a coal merchant in Cromwell Road, Albert belonged to the choir at St Peter's Church as well as being a keen footballer and cricketer. The Courier reported that he joined "E" Company of the Kent Cyclist Battalion in September 1914 when, before being sent to the front, he was killed in a motor accident in the streets of Canterbury.

Alexander Seggie

The records show that Alexander Seggie (pictured) was born in Dublin in 1893, but his parents, William and Janet, moved to 28 Prince's Street some time before 1911. He enlisted with the Public Schools



Battalion shortly after the outbreak of war, in September 1914, and received his commission in May 1915, becoming a 2nd Lieutenant with "B" Company, 9th Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers. He was killed in action at the start of the Battle of the Somme at Beaumont Hamel, France on 1st July 1916. He was 24.

Alexander Seggie is recorded at the Ancre British Cemetery Beaumont-Hamel, France and at St Peter's Church. His parents had the words, "Your name is hallowed in the home you loved" engraved on his headstone.

Peace celebrations

The date chosen for Peace Day celebrations was 19th July 1919.

In Tunbridge Wells not only was the Town Hall decorated with flags but there were other decorations all over the town. To start the day

there was a Peal of Joy from the bells at St Peter's and St Augustine's, followed by church services around the town. Then at 10.30 a procession began at Grosvenor Bridge, paraded through the centre of the town down to the High Street and up to the cricket ground, where, according to the Courier, "the front of the parade caught up with the tail as it made a circular tour of the cricket ground".

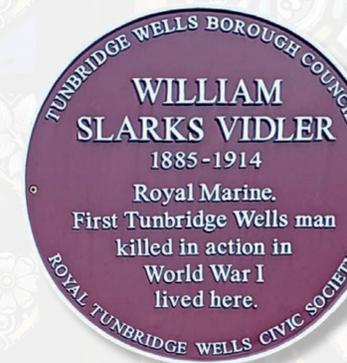


PHOTO CREDIT: THE AMELIA CENTRE. WITH THANKS

A memorial plaque commemorates

William Slarks Vidler was born in Brenchley but grew up in Tunbridge Wells. He worked as a milkman and then joined the Royal Marine Light Infantry in 1907. William served on the HMS Amphion and became the first man from Tunbridge Wells to be killed when the ship was lost in the war.

The Kent & Sussex Courier reported 'He was the 4th son of Mr & Mrs Vidler of 55 Nelson Road... He was well known in the Hawkenbury area for having a bright and cheery disposition.'



THE WAR YEARS * WORLD WAR II

WORLD WAR II : 1939-1945

Bombs over Kent

During the Second World War, German planes, escaping the British but still carrying bombs, would drop them indiscriminately over Kent to lighten their load. One bomb fell on a house opposite St Peter's School, others fell in the local area including Cromwell Road. Sheila Bullen (see right) remembers a bomb falling very close to the school and, although it didn't explode, it caused much grief and shock to the inhabitants. In August 1940 nine bombs were dropped on Calverley Grounds. Fortunately, there were no injuries. In September 1940 a bombing raid killed 12 people and injured a further 15. The Kent and Sussex Hospital was badly damaged as well as 96 other properties.

In May 1941, Dunorlan became a billeting point for soldiers and also home to the War Damages Commission for the South East – no easy task, as this covered all of Kent, Sussex and Surrey.

It seems that since Tunbridge Wells was built away from the industrial towns it escaped much of the damage that other areas experienced.

A local fighter in WWII



Horace Burchett was only 17 when he joined the RAF in 1944, initially as a pilot, navigator and bomb aimer, but he was soon remustered to Flight Engineer on a Lancaster and crewed up with an Australian Squadron. His first operation was in October 1944 and after being shot down over Bohlen on their 29th operation, the crew was split up and Horace was sent to the Far East. However, the war was coming to an end and eventually he was demobbed.

Sheila Still (née Bullen) remembers

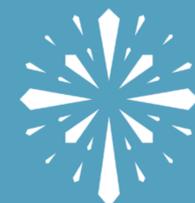
Sheila was born in 1938 in Halls Hole Road and attended St Peter's School. When the alarm sounded from the siren in Forest Road the teacher said, "Get under your desks." Later we walked to the bomb shelters in the playground. When I asked what would happen if a bomb fell while we were walking, the teacher said, "Stop talking and keep walking."

Once, Mum set the table before we went for a walk but, while we were out, a bomb fell destroying three neighbouring houses. The blast shattered our windows sending glass over all the food. Mum just picked up the cloth by its corners and shook the remains into the dustbin.

Food was short even on rations, but a man from Bayhall Farm would stop at Halls Hole Road so we could fill up our jugs with milk.



Sheila as a schoolgirl and more recently



CHANGES IN THE CHURCH BUILDING

Between 1877 and 1886 bells were hung in the tower

Local ladies raised the money to pay for the 8 bells in St Peter's tower. These bells can be used for change ringing, a process by which a pattern of movements is followed so that all permutations of the eight bells are included. After World War I, the bells were rung to commence the Peace Celebration Day on 19th July 1919.

These days the pealing of bells before morning service is a simpler affair of rounds or modifications of rounds, while at a funeral a single bell tolls once for each year of the person's life.

The clock in the tower, given by George Jackman, a local clockmaker and silversmith, was added in 1879. This must have been a great help to local residents, not least in getting to work on time, since most of them would have been unable to afford a watch.

Ian Cochrane remembers



Ian and his bike are well known!

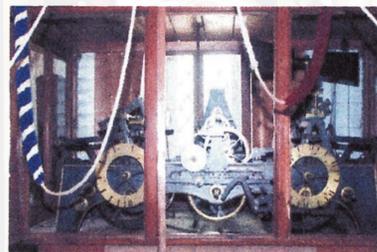
When I was 18 or 19, I heard the bells of St Peter's ringing. Mr Ladd taught me to ring and I have been doing so ever since.

In really cold weather we would have a heater in the aisle during services.

Mr Chandler was verger and gardener until his death in the 70s, at which point I took over the gardening.

At one church holiday I learnt Psalm 23 word for word – I still know it by heart.

I remember Frank Shorter and his work on the north aisle conversion because I helped him along with others.



Clock face and mechanism

Pew rents

In Victorian times pews were numbered and it was usual for people to pay an annual rent for a particular seat in a pew. Money raised in this way was given to the vicar. Free seating was provided on benches for those who couldn't afford pew rents. In the early 1930s this system was abolished and the free benches were removed, while the pews remained until 2008.



'Free' seating on benches in the centre of the aisle were removed in the early 1930s

The new organ



Consecration of the organ (Assistant Bishop, John Hurst (minister), Frank Shield-Shibild (assistant minister), Stanley Chandler (verger), Philip Whitbourne, Rev Samuel Habimana (who had fled persecution in Africa))

In 1970 a new organ became available from Temple Methodist Church in Yarmouth. This was duly collected and installed, and was dedicated by the Rt Rev J K Russell, Assistant Bishop of Rochester, in January 1971. The opening recital was given by Geoffrey Tristram, FRCO (Fellow of the Royal College of Organists), of Christchurch Priory, Bournemouth.



Organ keys and stops



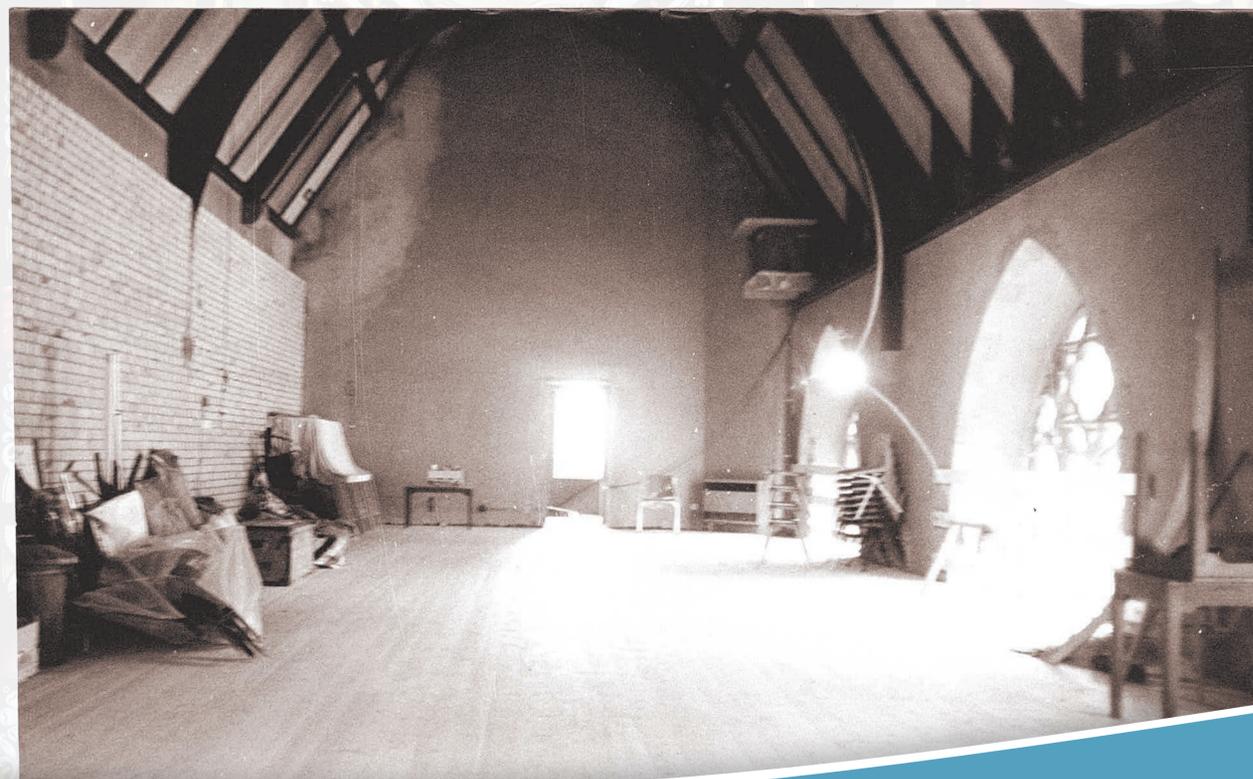
MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BUILDING

Church and North Aisle redevelopment in the 1970s

It was during the 1970s that the main redevelopment of the church took place. First, the pews at the back of the church were removed in 1971 and the area was made into the foyer. Frank Shorter, a carpenter, made the wood and glass screen separating the foyer from the nave, while other members helped to redecorate the area.

Then came the North Aisle Development in the mid 1970s. Members of the church helped, both financially and practically where possible, but a large sum of money was still needed. The Mission Hall in Hawkenbury was sold to raise the necessary funds, with the new halls being used for future meetings once built.

As well as having two extra halls for use with meetings and children's work, this development provided the toilets and the kitchen needed for social events to take place.



2 The Courier, February 6, 1981

SELF-HELP STORY

How parish built its hidden halls

A CASUAL passer-by of St Peter's Church, Bayhall Road, Tunbridge Wells, may not even notice the new church halls.

This would not be surprising for the halls, now in ever increasing demand, are embodied within the church building itself.

They were constructed by sectioning off the north aisle of the church. With the addition of an extra floor, Peter's Hall was then built upstairs with Stanley Chandler's Hall and other rooms underneath.

The project illustrates just what can be done by enthusiasm and self help, for members of the congregation saved £15,000 of the cost of the building by doing some of the work themselves.

Now their labours are paying off, and the hall and adjacent rooms are well used by the community.

Completed in 1978, the Stanley Chandler Hall and Peter's Hall cost a total of £50,000 to complete. Calculations at present-day prices mean the cost today would be £130,000.

Modern kitchen facilities and plenty of room and equipment mean provision can be made for a four-course meal for between 60 and 70 people.

SOUP LUNCHEONS

The halls are used by various Christian charitable organisations for a missionary conference and Christian societies as well as overseas students who use the halls as a language school in the holidays.

The Stanley Chandler Hall, named in memory of a respected member of the congregation, who was for many years a verger, is also the venue for soup lunches prepared by ladies of the congregation.

The lunches are prepared every other Wednesday for anyone who wants them. There is no charge, but visitors are asked to make a contribution.

"The response has been encouraging, but there is room for more people," said the Rev John Hurst. "We feel it is important for people to circulate within the community, and it is for people who would not otherwise do this that we started the idea."

"It is often very difficult to prise people out of their insularity, and this is one way of doing it. People who live on their own very often don't bother to cook for themselves and here they can be sure of getting something to eat."

ISOLATED MOTHERS

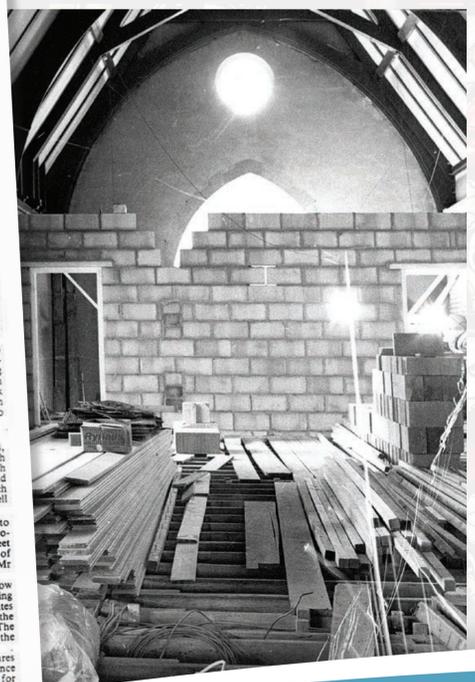
The same insularity, he says, can be felt by mothers with young children and it was with this in mind that the mothers and toddlers club was started each Wednesday afternoon. It is well supported.

"Some young mothers tend to be a bit isolated and the club provides them with a chance to meet others within the fellowship of the Christian Church," said Mr Hurst.

Although the halls are now completed, work on maintaining the building is still going on. Estimates are currently being sought for the re-roofing of the north aisle. The cost is expected to be in the region of £6,000.

Among the interesting features of the building is the entrance porch floor, the wooden tiles for which were collected for £2 from the former Beacon Hotel at Crowborough which has since been demolished.

THE REV John W. Hurst, vicar of St Peter's Church, Tunbridge Wells, beside the old stained glass window on display in the entrance hall to the church and the halls



MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS IN CHURCH LIFE

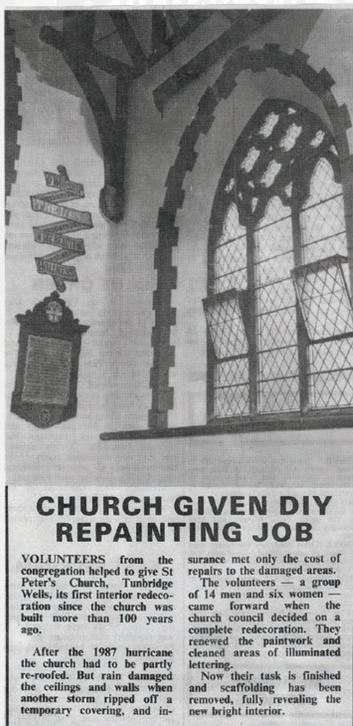
Hurricane damage and the redecoration of the church

The original pale green walls from 1875 became very grubby over the years and were repainted in 1911. Then, in the 1970s, an Assistant Curate, Frank Shild-Schibild, left some money in his will for the chancel to be repainted again. Of course, this only served to highlight the deterioration of the rest of the church paint work, but at least a start had been made.

The storm in 1987 resulted in the church having to be partially re-roofed. Before the work could be completed, another storm ripped off the temporary roof covering, causing damage to the internal ceilings and walls inside. Insurance paid for £10,000 of repairs to the roof, but the PCC felt it would be wrong to leave a job half done. Many people volunteered their time to undertake this significant redecoration work. It was only the highest parts of the ceiling that had to be left to professional painters.

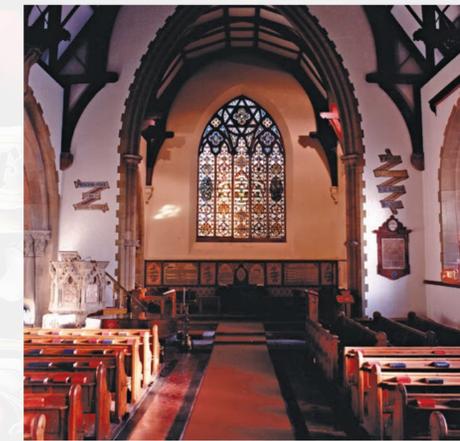


Church members form a painting team



Pews or chairs?

“Pews or chairs” was a recurring theme of heated debate during the 1990s and 2000s. Eventually the pews had to be removed to repair the rotting floorboards underneath, so the chairs came in and the church family adapted to the new system! In fact, it soon became apparent that there were considerable advantages to the new plan since many activities had outgrown the hall next door. A children’s club, Noah’s Ark, met weekly in term time for mums and pre-school children. Daddy & Me still meets monthly and meals and other events are held in the church.



New kitchen and church fellowship

To have a fully equipped kitchen in the church was an amazing development and greatly extended the scope for church fellowship. Meals, such as at harvest time and on Maundy Thursday, refreshments after church, during Bible studies and at other gatherings were enhanced by enjoying eating together. In 2016, the then 40-year old kitchen was completely refurbished.



The original kitchen and refurbished kitchen



THE PARISH GROWS

The parish boundaries in 1875

The original parish lay between Prospect Road, Bayhall Road and the north side of Forest Road including most of Camden Park.

At that time, what we now know as Hawkenbury was in the Kentish portion of the parish of Frant. In the late 1890s, that part of Hawkenbury recognised as being in Kent was transferred to Tunbridge Wells.

Bringing Hawkenbury into the parish in the 1890s

Originally, Hawkenbury was a neglected area of houses on the south of Hawkenbury Road. In the mid-19th century, two pious ladies started a Bible class, which eventually led to the building of the Congregational Church.

When typhoid infected the housing water supply in the late 19th century, these older houses were abandoned. A triangle of roads, called St Peter's Estate, was built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries starting with Nelson Road, originally called St Peter's Road, and then including Napier, Dorset and Polesden Roads. This area of Hawkenbury was transferred into the parish of St Peter's, and also the area south of Forest Road where there were houses and a chapel/school built on Hawkenbury Road by the old allotments.



Further expansion of the parish in the 1990s

When St Peter's Church was first consecrated in 1875, its parish was tiny compared to others in the area (roughly 2,000 people compared to 20,000 or 30,000). It wasn't until the 1990s that a review was carried out. This led to the parish gaining another area of Hawkenbury – the 1960s estate comprising Maryland Road, Forest Way and the adjoining roads, which had been in St Mark's parish.

To the north, the boundary was extended to include the north side of Bayhall Road, much of Pembury Road, Kingswood Road and Halls Hole Road, which had previously been part of St James' Parish.

Sherbourne Close

Sherborne Close was originally built for elderly people who had been in service and comprised 32 small semi-detached flats, let at moderate rates.

These were declared open by the Duke of Kent in 1938. In the 1970s, more flats were needed and these were opened by the Duchess of Kent.



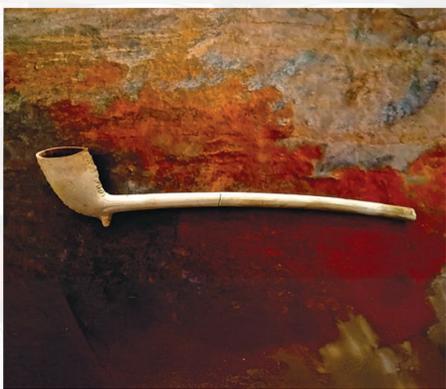
LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Letter of items found in the church tower

At a church cleaning session in the early 1990s, James Akehurst found an assortment of items left from many years earlier in the bell tower.

This included:

- a clay pipe
- a small message from the churchwardens asking the congregation to donate money towards the vicar as pew rents had been inadequate



- many pew tickets
- an 1890 poster advertising The Irish Church Mission to the Roman Catholics
- a poster for E. Edwards confectioner of Camden Road and various other papers, the oldest of which was a part of the Sportsman Weekly 1884.



2025 – The year of our 150th anniversary

Peregrine falcons move in, pigeons move out

Carol Watson writes: *In March 2022, a pair of peregrine falcons moved into the tower of St Peter's. I heard their distinctive screeching before I saw them. It was not long after my first sighting that I saw them exchanging twigs in their talons in mid-air... they were nesting!*

Peregrine falcons normally nest on cliffs in order to dive and achieve the speed they need to hunt their prey. They reach speeds of up to 240 mph, making them the fastest living creatures on earth and very successful hunters.

The pigeons moved out of the tower once the peregrines moved in. The church steps were littered with the falcons' meal leftovers.

Repairs to the church roof were put off until they had moved out, once their chicks had fledged. They have returned in spring every year since.



The church and surrounding streets

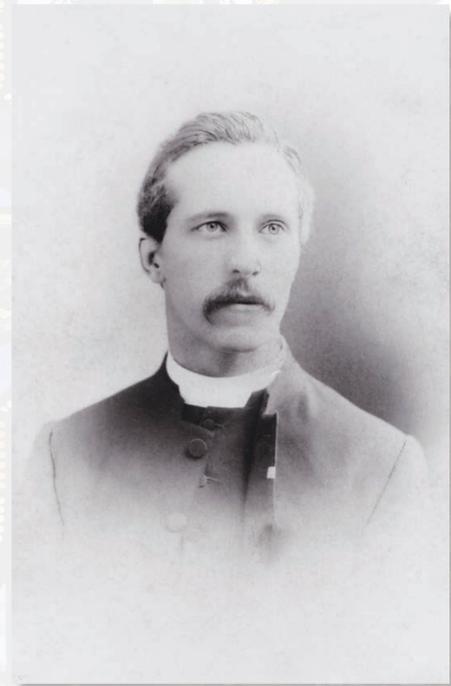
The church currently has plans to undertake further improvements to the building to make it even more welcoming as well as environmentally friendly. These plans include new heating and lighting systems, and the replacement of the current toilets, along with the provision of an accessible toilet. These major works all have to be paid for by St Peter's and require a significant amount of careful planning, including working closely with those who rent the church halls, and making sure we have the opportunity to celebrate our 150th anniversary in the grounds and building.



LOOKING BEYOND THE PARISH

SOME OF ST PETER'S MISSION WORKERS

A former curate is murdered by rebels



William Humphrey, former curate of St Peter's, was murdered by rebels on the outskirts of Freetown, Sierra Leone on 25th March 1898. He was travelling with supplies to aid local converts caught up in an insurrection led by a regional war lord. Humphrey had arrived in Freetown eight years earlier when he became Principal of the Fourah Bay College, an educational establishment founded by the Church Missionary Society. The Mission's correspondence at the time records that Humphrey was highly regarded. He was hardworking and for a long time blessed with good health, a rare thing for Westerners in that part of the world. He was 35 years old when he was killed; he left a wife, Ellen and twin boys.

Frank Allen also goes to Sierra Leone

Franks Allen was born in 1873 and lived with his family above a grocery shop at the bottom of Grosvenor Road. He was a member at St Peter's and decided to become a missionary in his late teens following in the footsteps of William Humphrey, a former curate at St Peter's. Frank began his duties at a mission station in Ro-Gbere in the Temne Country. He helped establish new mission outposts and was beginning to make a name for himself when he was struck down in June 1896 with a serious bout of dysentery. His strength was never quite the same and he died the following year on 30th June 1897 in Port Lokkoh.



Barry and Felicity Tomlinson

Felicity, the daughter of John Hurst's first warden, Raymond Baker, was a very keen member of the church youth groups in the 1960s and later became a nurse. Barry joined the youth group later when he was in sixth form. They married in 1969 and Barry trained for ordination. They went out to Santiago, Chile in 1976 to serve with the South American Missionary Society. Barry worked there as Diocesan Treasury Administrator for 3 years, and upon returning to England served in ministry, chiefly in Norfolk.

Within living memory

Older members of the church will remember Gordon & Pat Lavy and family and their tremendous contribution to church life. After attending Tunbridge Wells Girls Grammar School, daughter Fiona trained in nursing and midwifery. In 1982 she went with TEAR Fund to Kagando hospital, a small mission hospital in western Uganda, where she worked as a midwife. While at Kagando, Fiona met her future husband, Dr Andrew Mortimore, also working with TEAR Fund. Andrew had come to Uganda having had to leave Sudan due to the civil war.

The Lavy family had previously spent several years in Uganda where Gordon worked as a surgeon at Mengo hospital in Kampala. Pictured in the photo with Fiona is Zac Kalega, the administrator of Mengo hospital, who had long been friends with the Lavy family.



CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR MISSION WORK OVERSEAS

The Bible is best read in one's own language

Originally from Belfast, Sharon Gray came to Tunbridge Wells in 1978 to work in the computer room at NPI (a pensions' company). She settled into church life at St Peter's, but felt called to mission work. Following her time at Bible college, Sharon trained with Wycliffe Bible Translators. In 1988 she joined the translation team in Sangha, Mali. In 1996 the Dogon New Testament was completed, giving local people the Bible in their own language. After that, she continued working for Wycliffe at their head office in Texas, where she still lives.



The Dogon translation team: (L-R) Timothy, Sharon, Liz, Amaguimé

Amy has a taster of mission work



Amy Watson and her family came to St Peter's when she was at Claremont Primary School. At the age of 19 she felt called to spend time in mission work and went to Ghana for 9 months in 2016 where she helped long-term worker Penny Bakewell. Travelling to the north of the country, she spent her time teaching children in the Reading Club and Bible Club. Amy is now married with a young family and continues to visit us at St Peter's from time to time.

How we support mission partners today

At St Peter's, we continue to encourage those who feel called to mission work to explore the many opportunities and needs both in this country and further afield. We currently partner with the following mission agencies in prayer and financial giving: Release International, People International and Serving in Mission. This enables us to support fellow believers and their families suffering from persecution and deprivation in numerous countries and to encourage small, minority churches in Africa and Central Asia.

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL



OUR MINISTERS



Arrival of John Hurst

John Hurst came from Blackburn to St Peter's in 1959 with a mission to grow the church. His warden was Mr Baker, the headmaster of St James' School and father of Felicity Tomlinson, mentioned on the missionary board. His curate, George Campbell, started Pathfinders, a weekly youth group for local teens which was well attended.

Mrs Hurst led a weekly group for women of all ages, which became very popular and probably brought more people into the church from beyond the parish boundaries. For many years the Hursts organised family holidays in the summer, sometimes combining with other churches and inviting guest visitors to lead evening Bible studies.



John & Barbara Hurst were great dog lovers!

- Rev A Howell Smith – October 1875
- Rev Joseph E Rogers – January 1886
- Rev R W Atkinson – August 1892
- Rev Charles Courtenay – October 1895
- Rev John L Cobham – March 1912
- Rev W H Ferguson – September 1919
- Rev H Lyndon Potter – July 1921
- Rev Hubert L Fenn – February 1935
- Rev Edward F Yorke – October 1940
- Rev Robert H Walker – March 1943
- Rev F T Ellis – February 1948
- Rev H R Ward – February 1952
- Rev John W Hurst – July 1959
- Rev Richard Payn – May 1992
- Rev Mike Warren – September 2004

Richard Payn



Richard Payn spent 14 years in Geelong, Australia and then 11 years at Christ Church, Lowestoft before coming to Tunbridge Wells. He arrived with his wife Margaret and family, including two dogs, Biggles and Algie. He announced in the church newsletter, "I will continue St Peter's strong Bible and evangelical traditions."

Our current Minister



Mike Warren became St Peter's vicar in 2004.

He trained at Oak Hill Theological College, served his curacy at St John's Tunbridge Wells and spent 6 years as vicar in a group of seven rural churches on the Essex/Cambridgeshire borders, before coming to St Peter's. Mike

is married to Sarah and they have two grown-up daughters, he enjoys playing golf, is a keen gardener and plays piano and alto sax. Mike is also Chair of Trustees for Biblical Counselling UK, and has completed a Certificate in Biblical Counselling.

Our Assistant Minister is Phil Peddar

Phil joined St Peter's in the summer of 2017. He grew up in Wimbledon and spent much of his life living in London. He is married to Lucy and they have three young children.

Before training for full-time Christian ministry, Phil and Lucy lived in Spain where they spent two years working with *Grupos Bíblicos Universitarios*, the Christian student movement there.

Phil is keen on all kinds of music and enjoys numerous sports from football and tennis to snooker and snowboarding.

Vicar brings a family story full circle

THE arrival of the Rev. Richard Payn as the new vicar of St Peter's Church in Tunbridge Wells means the family has come full circle since his grandfather left for Australia to proclaim the Gospel earlier this century. Mr Payn and his wife Margaret had dreamed of coming to England for many years, but it was not until the Australian ministry that the opportunity arose. "I was strongly that I have to know where tensions between the old and the new are never far below the surface, he feels where I am going and what the Ministry is. My role is not to be political or act as a social worker - other people can do those things better - but I do have something very positive to say to those with whom I am going to work." The family's particular joy in England, says Mr Payn, "is to understand that they may not always find that acceptable, and show that the Gospel is relevant to their lives." Alongside his parish duties, Mr Payn will be acting as chaplain to the new Mayor, Cllr Dennis Smith, during the coming year. "It's a country where you can hold the same point of view, but it is a country where you can be yourself." After two years in the Blackburn Mr Payn moved to a parish in Lowestoft in this way.

St Peter's Church The Link

December 2004
Pleased to be back in Tunbridge Wells
Have you ever visited somewhere and had the feeling that one day you'd return?
It's something I have felt a few times in 1998, when I went for an interview at Nottingham School of Theology in 1994 when I came to Tunbridge Wells to look at the possibility of being a curate at St. Peter's, and finally, when we left the town in 1998.
And here we are after a 6 year sojourn in a village called Flecke, just south of Cambridge. So allow me to introduce myself.
I'm one of five boys, brought up in Surrey. I've worked at Lloyd's of London, as a part-time youth worker, and as a physiotherapist in the NHS. I'm married to Sarah, and we have two children. I love gardening (see, I've joined the HABA), playing bowls (I'm a member at the Royal) and golf (no, I can't afford the fees!).
Having been given such a warm welcome to the church, I would like to extend to you a similar invitation to St. Peter's church services (see meet at 10.30am each Sunday, with groups for all ages). Perhaps Christmas would be a good opportunity to check out your new vicar - details of services are at the back.
If you do come along, please introduce yourself. It's be very pleased to meet you (especially if you play golf!).
Mike
Mike Warren, Vicar



AT ST PETER'S WE LIKE DOING THINGS TOGETHER

Summer church holidays

Summer church holidays were a new idea in the 1960s and proved very popular, especially for families with young children and with the members of the youth groups. Activities and outings were organised and evening Bible studies held.



The 1964 church holiday



Hunt the officer... 4 people disguised themselves and tried to mingle in the village of Dolgellau, Wales. If spotted they were to be asked, "Have you changed your vest today?"

A holiday in the Loire Valley

In 1980, St Peter's Church was invited to stay as guests of the European Christian Mission in the Loire Valley, France. In addition to tours of local chateaux, cathedrals and nearby towns, there was time to relax, set up a hairdressing salon, and hold a sports afternoon.



An unforgettable trip to Israel

Armed with our water bottles, in May 1990 we were taken to all parts of Israel, staying in various accommodations including a kibbutz. Some places, like the Sea of Galilee, Mount Hermon, the garden tomb in Jerusalem and the old Roman fort at Masada, were very moving to visit, being relatively unchanged since the time of Jesus; other places, especially in Jerusalem, had monuments or churches built over famous sites. It was unforgettable and inspiring to walk in places where Jesus had walked.

A group tour by minibus, floating on the Dead Sea, and a Bar Mitzvah ceremony near the Wailing Wall. Many Jews had come to Israel from Russia, where they had not been allowed to hold the customary ceremony



Jubilees are great reasons to party

In 2002, 2012 and 2022 we celebrated the Gold, Diamond and Platinum Jubilees with food, fun and festivities. But it's not only jubilees we celebrate. There are many opportunities to get together including rugby or football finals!



The church's role in commemorating sacrifice

At the end of World War II, seeking to honour participants in both World Wars, the British government officially replaced Armistice Day with the new Sunday observance, Remembrance Sunday. Taking place on the second Sunday of November, it is a time to remember the sacrifice that so many made in order that others could be free. To mark the Centenary of Armistice Day in 2018, St Peter's held both an Act of Remembrance and a Thanksgiving Tea. Details of those remembered on the WWI memorial on the church wall were researched and displayed.



"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

John 15:13



St Peter's Church