

Parish Church of Saint Peter, Stanton Lacy

Faculty Petition for the Installation of Kitchen and Toilet Facilities

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

1. Setting of the Church

The Saxon Church of Saint Peter has stood in its rural setting in Stanton Lacy for around 1,000 years. It is located on the edge of the South Shropshire hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and is a local landmark. The site itself has indications of an earlier occupation and, according to local legend, was founded as a place of Christian worship by St Milburga in the 7th century.



St Peter's is a Grade 1 Listed Building.

2. The Living Churchyard

The current Churchyard lies within a larger, prehistoric enclosure. What remains today of the original is a site of approx. 1.5 acres in size, developed in the 18th/19th centuries. An extension was opened in 1923 to the opposite side of Carpenter's Lane, comprising an area of around 0.5 acre in size. New burials are accommodated here.

Volunteers manage the upkeep of the 'new' churchyard. The 'old' churchyard provides a bigger challenge and opportunity. It is maintained through a combination of twice-yearly visits by Caring for God's Acre, volunteers throughout the year and use of a landscape contractor during the growing season.

The 'old' Churchyard has a small arboretum, and a wide range of memorials and gravestones. The PCC aim here is to secure a balance between maintaining this unique and ancient habitat, preserving the heritage and encouraging local members of the community and visitors to enjoy the space.



This painting captures a real sense of the 'old' Churchyard. It is by local artist John Holliday.

Each year in early spring the Churchyard is carpeted with snowdrops and attracts a large number of visitors from across the Region.

The 'old' Churchyard continues to provide a place of calm and quiet reflection for those of all faiths and none.

3. Social History

The following extract from “A Guide to St Peter’s Church, Stanton Lacy” by Peter Klein provides a summary of some of the key links between St Peter’s Church and the leading local families over the last several hundred years;

By the time of Domesday however Stanton was held by the de Lacy family, the first of whom, Walter de Lacy, was one of the heroes of the Battle of Hastings. We are also told that there were then two priests here, and that de Lacy had given two-thirds of the tithes to the monastery of St Peter at Hereford which he had founded shortly before.

Walter's son Roger, who succeeded him, was banished in 1095 by William II and the manor given to the younger brother Hugh who helped establish the Augustinian priory at Llanthony. It is Llanthony Priory that shortly after 1103 was given the advowson, that is the right to nominate the priest to the benefice.

Although the principal priory was later moved to Gloucester, the association with Llanthony remained up until the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII; and as late as 1733 the village was referred to as Stanton Llanthony.

On the death of the last of the de Lacys, another Walter, in 1241, the estate was divided between his two granddaughters, one of whom, Maud, was the wife of Geoffrey de Geneville. Their granddaughter Joan inherited the manor on her marriage to the notorious Roger de Mortimer, first Earl of March, who was executed for high treason in 1330. The powerful Mortimer family were responsible for enlarging a number of local churches and endowing chantry chapels, and it is highly likely that at least the tower and the south transept at Stanton Lacy are their work

The Earldom merged with the Crown under Edward IV and the manor remained in Royal hands until 1561. In 1624 it was acquired by the Craven family who remained the patrons of the living until the mid-19 century when the patronage passed to the family of the present Earl of Plymouth

The Earl of Plymouth estate maintains its links with the Church to this day and is one of the significant donors to the refurbishment work at the centre of this Faculty Petition.

St Peter’s, then, has an extensive history but it is more than an ancient monument. It continues to be the home of a Christian community and a focal point for the Parish. It has 4 services per month, a congregation typically of 12-14 people and is a venue for a number of events, which we hope to increase. These have included the following;

- The church has a wonderful acoustic quality and has a history of organising successful live music events, such as choral performances and organ recitals, plus events such as poetry readings.
- It remains a focal point for key family events, for births, marriages and deaths within the community.
- It has a range of visitors each year. The visitors book includes a number of comments and describes how, in addition to those who are visiting opportunistically, perhaps because they are on walking or cycling holidays and cultural tours in the area, there are a number who visit for some very

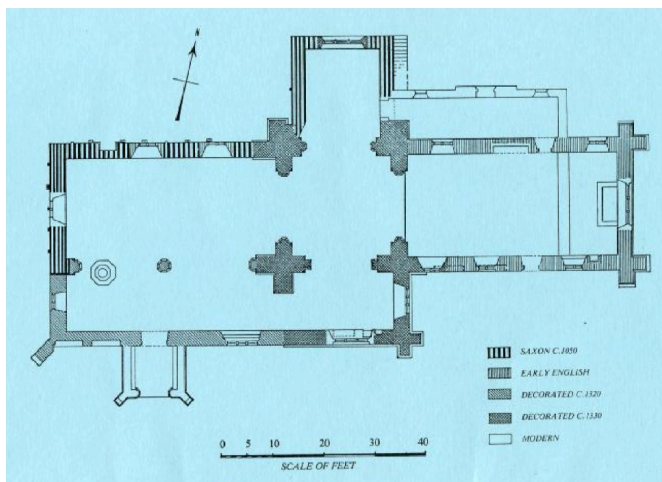
specific reasons. Some wish to re-visit personal connections to the church, with relatives who were married or baptised here, ancestors who are buried here, or relatives who have served the church previously. Some want to re-live their childhood memories – having being born in the area or even evacuated here during WW2. Others still are here for the annual snowdrop display.

- It continues to be a critical resource at times of communal difficulty, which became apparent during the recent Covid-19 Pandemic. It also functions as a place of communal celebration, and for example, organised an extensive Q70 programme of events in collaboration with the Village Hall.
- The churchyard is home to the official War Memorial for the parish, honouring the fallen from both World Wars and the Church hosts an annual commemorative service. In addition, there are 3 war graves in the churchyard, which are supported by the War Graves Commission.

St Peters has lived through some of the most momentous and challenging times in our history; bubonic plague, the Civil War and two World Wars. It has survived and can still offer a place of worship, reflection and calm, especially as we all face new challenges ahead.

4. The Church Building in General

St Peter's is one of the few churches mentioned in the Domesday Book but its history goes back even further. It was built circa 1050 and its Saxon origins are still visible in the stonework in the West and North walls of the Nave and part of North Transept, with its thin pilaster strips and doorway.



Plan of St Peter's showing main changes to the building over time

Source; 'A Guide to St Peter's Church, Stanton Lacy' by Peter Klein'

The church has incorporated many developments over time, with significant work done during the Norman period. The chancel is mainly 13th century with the tower and south transept built a century later. There are also notable 14th century tomb recesses.

A significant restoration was undertaken in 19th century by Dr. Joseph Bowles, vicar of St Peter's from 1847 to 1879.

With those and additional changes in the late 19th century, this is the Church layout we see today.

5. The Church Building in Detail

In the late 11th Century, the earlier Saxon cruciform building was modified to increase the size of the Chancel and the Tower. The West and North walls of the Nave retained their Saxon Pilasters, and in the North wall there is a Saxon Doorway.

The Chancel was enlarged in the 13th century and around 1320 the south Aisle and Arcade were constructed. Two canopied Tomb Recesses in the exterior of the South wall of the Nave date to mid-14th century, one supposedly for Edmund de Mortimer.

Circa 1480 roofs were renewed to their present pitches. In the late 16th century, the gable roof to the South Transept was constructed.

The restoration undertaken in the Victorian era under Dr. Bowles incorporated some wide-ranging changes. They included the building of a new vestry to the north of the chancel; the removal of the stairs to the belfry from inside the north transept to the exterior; the demolition of the western gallery; and the general replacement of the flooring (with most grave-slabs preserved). A new Pulpit was installed together with new Reredos and new Altar – all of Caen stone. New heating and a new organ followed, together with the 6 stained glass windows we see today, including 2 ‘Windows of Fragments’, constructed from pieces left over from the others.

In the late 19th century, the Organ was moved to its current position and the Choir placed in new stalls in the Chancel.

6. Contents of the Church

The Font dates to mid-14th century. Its current location was the result of the Victorian era changes mentioned above but there is evidence that it has been located in at least 2 other places within the church.

The Aumbry – small recess – in the North wall of the Nave is dated to circa 1380. There is a Parish Chest which dates to 1668 and bears the names of the 2 churchwardens of the time.

The organ was built by Gray and Davison of London and installed in 1854. As originally supplied it was a ‘Barrell and Finger’ organ, but the barrel was subsequently removed. It was transferred to current position in 1890. The organ was added to the Historic Organ List in 2022.

The present clock dates from 1897 and was made by John Smith and Sons of Derby. It is said to have replaced one which was over 400 years old.

The church bells at St Peter’s are an important part of our identity. The original peal of 6 bells was cast by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester and installed in 1693. One was replaced in 1778 and they were then re-hung in 1952. They were re-hung again in 1993 when 2 bells were added to provide the current peal of 8 bells. New ropes were fitted earlier in 2023.

The bells are sounded regularly for services and the local Tower practices each Friday. The bells are considered to be a fine peal both tonally and in the way they handle and ringers are pleased to come and ring them. The ringing chamber is bright and spacious which makes it ideal for touring groups and meetings. We are one of the towers where the Church Stretton District of the Hereford Guild meets annually.

7. Significance for Mission

The parish has only two ‘public’ buildings; the village hall which is over two miles from the village and the church itself. It has been the beating heart of the village for nearly a thousand years, but although it has been a focus of worship and faith, the ability to connect with a changing demographic is limited by the lack of amenities.

Neither children nor older adults can confidently use the church without toilet facilities and simple provision for light catering.

Other external groups would like to use the church with its superb setting and impressive acoustics but they have made it clear that they cannot do so with the church as it is.

The many visitors to the church (as mentioned previously) come for a variety of reasons. Some of the recurring comments we get indicate how people are simply pleased to be able to stay a while and just 'be'; to be able to sit and contemplate in an inspiring place with a peaceful atmosphere. One of the most frequently occurring messages is a thank you for keeping the church open.

The changes proposed will widen the appeal of the church, extend its welcome and enhance its capacity for use and engagement within the parish and community so it will truly be their church for the next thousand years.

8. Parts of the Church Affected and their Significance

The proposed work comprises;

- The installation of kitchen and toilet facilities
- Creation of an inner glazed entrance lobby with automatic sliding doors
- Re-location of the font
- Installation of a mains water supply
- Installation of a Trench-Arch drainage system in the churchyard

The kitchen and toilet facilities will be installed in the SW corner of the nave. We will be allocating approximately 5 sqm of space to create an accessible toilet with an open plan kitchen on the other side of a new partition wall, also around 5sq m in size.

The current inner doors will be removed and a new glazed lobby created, with access to the toilet off this space.

The provision of kitchen and toilet facilities will require the relocation of the font. As indicated above, it had been previously located in two other places within the church and was moved to its current location during the Victorian era. The scheme will involve returning the font to a former location.

The Church will be connected to a mains water supply for the first time and a Trench-Arch system will be used for the disposal of waste from the kitchen and toilet. It will be located under an existing pathway in the churchyard.

9. Assessment of the Impact of the Proposals

Our assessment of the impact of these proposals is as follows;

- [The installation of kitchen and toilet facilities](#)

The church has no toilet or kitchen facilities at present. The space proposed for these facilities currently accommodates the font (sitting on a large plinth) a table with various promotional material, hymn book storage, a bookcase for loaned books and a several display panels about the church and its projects. The move of the font is addressed in more detail below. Everything else is

easily re-located to a different part of the church where all items will remain accessible.

The SW corner of the nave is a large space comprising some 15 sq. m and can easily accommodate these new facilities and still leave a large area for circulation. The partition wall for the toilet will be angled in construction so as to preserve the view of the stained-glass window in the west wall of the nave.

- [Creation of an inner entrance lobby](#)

The current ill-fitting and wheelchair unfriendly inner doors will be removed. A glazed lobby with automatic doors will be created, with a side entrance off to the toilet. The current external doors will be re-hung to open outwards and provide suitable circulation space.

The lobby will take approx. 3 sq. m of space from within the nave but as indicated, the SW corner has ample space. The use of automated doors will provide much easier access to the church for those with mobility difficulties including wheelchair users.

The use of thermal glazing for the construction of the lobby will significantly improve heat retention in the church, resulting in reduced heating costs and the church's carbon footprint. This glazing will also facilitate better natural lighting in the church as it will be possible to keep the outer doors open during services.

- [Re-location of the font](#)

The font was transferred to its current location around 1850. Previously it had occupied at least 2 other places in the church that we can determine. We will now be returning it to one of those places, in front of the Saxon doorway in the N wall of the nave. From that position, it will be instantly visible on entering the church. In addition, the congregation will be able to better participate in ceremonial activity taking place at the font by simply turning around in their pews to face the font direct.

In transferring the font, we will remove and dispose of the stepped plinth on which it currently sits. This plinth, built at the time of the previous move, is badly designed (the steps present a trip hazard) and it occupies a large space relative to the size of the font itself. With its return to its former home, the font will once again sit level with the floor.

- [Mains water supply](#)

The site has no mains water at present. Currently, all water needed for events has to be supplied in containers. We anticipate the mains supply will enter the site near the main gate and run under the main driveway, minimising the risk of disturbance to any archaeology.

- [Trench-Arch drainage system](#)

We will install a Trench-Arch system for collection of waste from the kitchen and toilet. Where there is no mains sewage available, this system provides an alternative the use of septic tanks. It suits low volume usage, and is increasingly being used by churches as its relatively shallow depth reduces

the risks from excavation in churchyards. The system planned for St Peter's will be 10.5m long x 1m wide x 400mm deep.

In addition, Trench-Arch systems are less costly to install, have no running costs and represent a 'green' solution to the disposal of waste water.

- Overall design

The reasons for wanting to install kitchen and toilet facilities are explored in more detail in the accompanying 'Statement of Need'. The question of where to install these facilities on site has now been considered by three separate architects experienced in working with place of worship. They have each concluded that, taking account of cost but also overall impact on the building, the location set out in this petition provides the optimal approach.

10. Conclusion

Overall the PCC shares the view that the changes proposed will have no negative impact on the church building or its use; conversely, they represent a range of improvements that will have significant benefits (explored in more detail in the accompanying Statement of Need).

St Peter's has adapted over many centuries, which has allowed it to continue to play its role as a place of worship and a provider of support to the local community. It falls to the current generation of those concerned for the Church – the PCC, the wider community in the Parish, and the Diocese - to once again ensure that the church remains ready and able to take on new challenges. Though simple in scope, these improvements aim to do nothing less than secure a sustainable future for St Peter's.

SOURCES CONSULTED

1. "A Guide to St Peter's Church, Stanton Lacy" by Peter Klein – 1989 edition
2. St Peter's Church website – <https://www.stpeters-stantonlacy.co.uk/history>
3. War Memorials Online - <https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/258910>
4. Shropshire Tourism Churches Group - <https://bit.ly/47GXFR7>