

# **The Parish Church of St Peter, St Albans**



## **Conservation Management Plan**



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# Message from the Parochial Church Council

## Something along these lines is suggested.

St Peter's has a long history in being one of three pilgrim churches established by the Abbot of St Albans Abbey, in a town largely created by the church over one thousand years ago, and about 800 years after the first Christian martyr, Alban, was executed by the Roman authorities here.

Today St Peter's is a lively parish, open and inclusive Anglican church but made up of people of different backgrounds and opinions from within and beyond the parish boundaries. We aim to be a church for the city: a place of spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional refreshment in the city centre. We seek to give people the opportunity to learn and grow in their faith through relevant preaching and a variety of education courses and discussion groups.

We are an inclusive church that will give a warm welcome to everyone; and although we are currently not an especially diverse community, we enjoy the depth and perspective that variety brings.

We are committed to the care and conservation of the church and the development of the building as a church fit for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The church is a centre for many community activities, including a vibrant concert programme. Our commitment to serving the wider community remains a central part of the mission of St Peter's and, together with our church care and conservation goal, is a key motivation for our plans to re-order the church at this time. We play host to important

town events, including the annual St Albans Pilgrimage which takes over the church for a few days and commences at St Peter's before making its way through the city centre to St Albans Abbey.

The PCC first became aware of the desirability of producing a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) during 2020 following consultations with the Church Buildings Council, DAC and others about a faculty application to replace some seating in the church. This came some considerable way into our current re-ordering project which we first began to define during 2012 and which led to a series of firm proposals and plans. Works to implement these proposals began during 2018 and so this CMP comes approximately mid-way through implementing the first phase of the plans.

The PCC is cognisant of the fact that while much at St Peter's is of significance, several previous restorations and re-orderings – particularly those at either end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – which significantly changed the building. Much was lost then which can never be recovered, although much was also gained. Therefore, the PCC regards this CMP as a vital document helping it to realise our goal of revitalising the church's facilities while, at the same time, protecting our legacy. The CMP also brings together information regarding the religious, archaeological, architectural, historical, artistic and social aspects of St Peter's. With the help of the CMP, the PCC will continue to maintain, protect and enhance this historic church and its environs and meet the needs of its varied users.

# Executive Summary

St Peter's church is the historic parish church of St Albans, the site of the first Christian martyr about 1800 years ago. Christian worship has taken place at St Peter's for over 1,000 years. Its archaeological remains, scant as they are, make St Peter's church one of the oldest buildings in the town which became St Albans. St Peter's is a pilgrim church, one of three, established by a Saxon Abbot. It is a Grade II\* listed building of exceptional historic importance.

The church should not be seen as an isolated monument but understood within the context of the development of St Albans since the Iron Age. It is very close to the modern-day city centre and, standing prominently as it does at the North end of St Peter's Street, its townscape significance is exceptional, particularly as one of the key elements in the St Peter's Street, Hatfield Road and marketplace ensemble of listed buildings.

The church and its medieval churchyard lie with the Three Churches Conservation Area in St Albans. The church has Saxon origins: its cruciform plan was established between the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century. However, it has been altered many times over the centuries in response to changing liturgical preferences, various phases of serious deterioration, the whims of churchwardens in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the forceful views of an amateur architect in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century whose restoration significantly changed the balance of the building. He made the church the essentially Victorian, Gothic-style church of today.

Several published histories provide information about the church which are summarised here. They include the work of R. Clutterbuck (1815) and W. Carey Morgan (1899). Evidence relating to the archaeology of the church and churchyard is summarised in Niblett and Thompson (2005) and the interior features of the church are recorded by the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies (1978).

This Conservation Management Plan essentially summarises what is currently known about the church and site, and bases its evaluation of significance, vulnerability, and the thus derived management policies on this summary. Observations have been made which attempt to interpret what can be seen and what has already been written and collated in the light of current understanding. No original research has been undertaken for the compilation of this CMP, although the underground archaeology of the church and churchyard has research potential.

# 1 Introduction

The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for St Peter's Church, St Albans was compiled by Dennis Parker and Peter Court in 2021 on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC). Richard Butler kindly provided the timeline of fabric changes in the church and the timeline of events, both of which are reproduced in the Appendices. He also provided other invaluable assistance with sources of information.

The document has benefited from input from members of the Ministry Team; the PCC; the church's architects - Michael Dales and Matthew Stevens of the Michael Dales Partnership Ltd of Streatley; and from advice of local historian Kate Morris. In addition, through liaison with the Diocese, the document has been through and has completed a process of external consultation in which it has been scrutinised by a member of the Diocesan Advisory Council. The following external stakeholders were given an opportunity to comment on the document: Historic England, the Church Buildings Council, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the local Conservation Officer and the Victorian Society. A number of minor amendments were made following these external consultations.

The CMP should be read alongside two closely associated documents: a *Statement of Significance* and a *Statement of Need*.

The plan was written following the format of the CBC's guidance document, *Conservation Management Plans: Guidance for Major Churches* (CBC 2007: available at [www.churchcare.co.uk](http://www.churchcare.co.uk)). Two examples of CMPs made available online by the CBC proved to be useful in compiling this CMP (namely The Minster, Cathedral and Priority Church of St Germanus of Auxerre, Truro; and The Parish and University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford). Extensive use has also been made of the Statements of Significance and Need that have been compiled for St Peter's in recent years.

At its simplest, a conservation plan is a document which sets out what is significant in a place and, consequently, what policies are appropriate to

enable that significance to be retained and even enhanced in its future use and development.

This CMP is intended to guide the latest process of re-ordering at St Peter's commenced in 2018 (following a lengthy period of investigation commencing in 2010) and to enhance the church as a place of Christian worship and mission and as a community resource.

It is hoped that the CMP will be of value to the Parochial Church, Parish, The Churchlands Trust, the City and District of St Albans and the Hertfordshire County Council in providing appropriate policies and direction for day-to-day management of the site as well as higher level needs and projects. It is an important document for evaluating programmes of work affecting the church. At some point in the future, these might involve applications for grant-aid from grant-aiding bodies and other sources. Preparation of a CMP is advantageous towards or sometimes a requirement of receiving grants.

Conservation management and planning are increasingly understood to be crucial to the beneficial use and guardianship of important historic structures and sites. CMPs are designed to describe a place and its community and define its significance. They then go on to assess the vulnerability of the place and issues and constraints affecting its use. Finally, they establish policies to ensure the long-term protection of the place, and the retention and, if possible, enhancement of its significance.

The objectives of this CMP are therefore to:

**Understand the church building and site and its use by the community** by drawing together information including documents and physical evidence in order to present an overall description of the church and its churchyard through time. This includes a brief description of the church and site today, how it is used and perceived, and identifies areas for further research.

**Assess its significance** both generally and for its principal components, on a local, national and international level. It may need correcting and it will inevitably require updating. The CMP should be closely related to other key documents including the Inventory and the Quinquennial Inspection reports.

**Assess vulnerability** by identifying issues affecting the significance of the site and building remains, or

which have the potential to affect them in the future and how threats may be mitigated, and potential realised.

**Develop management policies** to ensure that the significance of the church and site is retained in any future management, use or alteration. If possible, this significance should be enhanced through implementation of these policies.

### **Status of this document**

This CMP has been produced during an active process of re-ordering at St Peter's church, as explained in the message from the PCC above. The CMP summarises what is currently known about the church and site, and bases its evaluation of significance, vulnerability, potential and management policies on this summary. The document refers to and uses various informative historical sources of information about the church and these are appropriately referenced when used. No original research has been undertaken for the compilation of this document, but suggestions have been made regarding areas where such work might in future be most advantageously directed. Key amongst these are the questions regarding the early development of the church.

The CMP should not be seen as a closed document but a dynamic one. It should be regularly consulted, checked and added to as more evidence or issues come to the fore. In the light of new evidence, it may need correcting and it will inevitably require updating. The CMP should be closely related to other key documents including the Inventory and the Quinquennial Inspection reports.

### **Acknowledgements**

Figures 3, 17 and 18 are reproduced by courtesy of Robin Hamman of Cybersoc.



## 2 Understanding the place and the community

This section describes the location and setting of the church, the church and community and a description of the building and site including history and archaeology.

### 2.1 The location and setting of the church

The Parish church of St Peter's occupies a commanding position on elevated land close to the centre of the historic town of St Albans, within the St Albans Conservation Area as designated under the Civic Amenities Act 1967/69. This is the parish church of the old defended town and today's parish church of the centre of St Albans and beyond to its South. St Peter's has always been a more integral part of the town centre than the other two churches (i.e. St Michael's and St Stephen's) at the historic entrances to the town.

The church is at the Northern end of St Peter's Street, which is the broad, tree-lined, high street of St Albans (Figure 1). The townscape impact of the church is further maximised by its highly visible site which extends laterally across the otherwise straight South-to-North line of St Peter's Street causing it to narrow and divert a little to the West in its Northerly course. Visitors to St Albans can be forgiven to sometimes mistaking the church for St Albans Abbey which is located to the South of St Peter's Street from which it is barely visible.

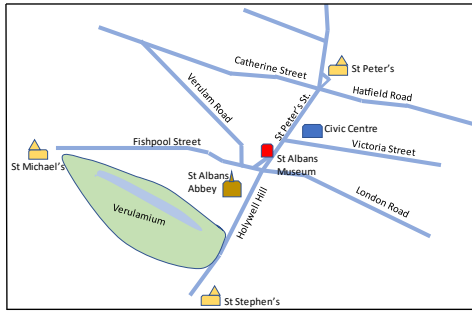
The vista from the West is from St Peter's Road which is a relatively short residential road. From here the church is very impressive and completely dominates. The vista from the north is largely obscured until one approaches the churchyard wall and the view of the church with its modern North extension and Octagon room come into full view. On the other hand, the view of the church from the East is a beautiful one across the green oasis of the churchyard.



*Figure 1: View along St Peter's Street from the Clocktower showing St Peter's church*

The church is located on one of the main roads into St Albans just to the North of the cross-roads of St Peter's Street with Hatfield Road and Catherine Street (Figure 2). Between these cross-roads and the church is Church Green with its war memorial (Figure 3). St Peter's Street is a spacious, bustling high street, with lime trees lining both sides. It is the site of an historic market which was granted a special Royal Charter in 1553. However, the market is well documented as far back as the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The current day market is firmly established in the city centre, within a stone's throw of St Peter's church, and runs the length of St Peter's Street and Market Place (Figure 4).

Focusing upon the immediate surroundings of the church, its curtilage is relatively large. The churchyard in which the church is located towards its Western end is a relatively large one and almost certainly the remnant of a much larger churchyard in the past. It has a West-facing, walled frontage of some 120 metres, through which it may be approached through a Lych Gate from the Northern end of St Peter's Street. There are also entrances to the churchyard from the East and South-East. The churchyard has a South-facing, walled frontage of



*Figure 2: The location of St Peter's church in relation to principal city centre streets, St Albans Abbey, St Michael's and St Stephen's churches*



*Figure 3: War memorial and Church Green looking North to St Peter's church*



*Figure 4: St Peter's Street on market day*

approximately 27 metres through which it may be approached by a Southern entrance at Church Green which is the location of gardens and the city's war memorial. The remainder of the Southern boundary of the churchyard is marked by low walls or fencing and the Northern end of St Peter's Institute which is an old school building occupied by a number of local businesses. The Northern boundary is fenced. The churchyard is approximately 1.6 ha (4 acres) in size and is laid out as a calm and beautiful, leafy parkland with gardens and an orchard. It is crossed by various pathways connecting the church to entrances.

Residents, visitors and workers often make their way from surrounding residential areas to the town.



*Figure 5: St Peter's churchyard*

The churchyard is never closed. Office workers and visitors can often be seen, particularly in warmer weather, seated on benches provided by the church, relaxing in this green space or eating their lunch. Those interested in the churchyard may follow the churchyard trail signed by a number of interpretation panels providing information about the history of the church, churchyard and the natural surroundings.

The churchyard, which is now closed for burials, was an important burial ground for centuries and has 459 identified gravestones, half laid flat. Most are 19<sup>th</sup> century and are of Carrara marble, Portland stone or York stone (Council for the Care of Churches, 2021). The garden of remembrance adjacent to the church is now closed for burial of ashes. The sensory garden was revamped fifteen years ago and renamed the Garden of Hope (Figure 6). Hope is signified by an inscribed standing stone 'in God we trust so there is hope'. The garden also has a 'Tree of Life Memorial Structure' with engravable leaves, where a grassed area is now dedicated and available for burial of ashes. There are a few places where the churchyard has intentionally been left overgrown with wild flowers but there are extensive grassed areas which benefit in the summer from the shade of many trees. There is a small car park on the south side of the churchyard.

As 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs clearly show, the connection of the church to St Peter's Street to the south used to be much more direct than it is today. This is because of an intervening roundabout just to the south of Church Green where the Hatfield Road and Catherine Street crossroads are located (Figures 2 and 7). This roundabout was constructed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to allow buses from a nearby bus station to turn but it has the unfortunate effect of partially separating St Peter's from the

broader part of St Peter's Street<sup>1</sup> of which it has been historically integral.



*Figure 6: The Hope Stone, memorial sculpture and Vicarage beyond*

The church is located opposite or close to a cluster of historic buildings which have associations with St Peter's church. These include Ivy House, a striking three-storey, red brick house built in 1719. A plaque on the front of the house says that it belonged to, or was built by, Edward Strong<sup>2</sup>. Ivy House is now the offices of Debenhams, Ottaway, solicitors. Just to the north of Ivy House are the Grade II listed Pemberton Alms houses - a row of six red brick, one-storey dwellings dating from 1627. There are also some alms houses at the Eastern edge of the churchyard.

The Marlborough Buildings are a little further away in Hatfield Road which joins St Peter's Street at the roundabout. These Buildings are a Grade II listed and comprise a large, open courtyard of two-storey alms houses in red brick, built by Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough in 1736<sup>3</sup>. The house at 78 St Peter's Street abuts the Southern boundary of and entrance to the churchyard beside Church Green and is Grade II listed. Built in the 1930s to replace an existing house, it was listed along with those adjacent to it because of its streetscape value. It has a thoroughly modernised exterior and attic and very high-pitched roof. This house is owned by the church and is currently occupied by the verger. Numbers 78 to 58 St Peter's Street are a group of similarly listed terraced houses. There are other listed buildings

<sup>1</sup> It is understood that the roundabout is no longer required because the bus garage that used to be just to the north of the church was demolished for residential purposes several decades ago.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Strong was a master mason who had worked with Christopher Wren on St Paul's Cathedral (see Appendix X). Ivy House was the mansion of Rev Robert Rumney, vicar of St Peters from 1715 to 1743 and the information given on the plaque is almost certainly incorrect..

nearby to the church including, for example, the Grade II listed Cock Public House on the corner of Hatfield Road and St Peter's Street, built in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century or early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Beyond that to the South in St Peter's Street there are many listed buildings.

Moving further from the immediate surroundings of the church, St Peter's Street connects St Peter's at its Northern end to the precinct of St Albans Abbey, which is approximately one kilometre distant and quite close to its South-Western end (Figure 8). About 1 mile (1.6 km) South-West of the Abbey are the extensive remains of the old Roman city of Verulamium, a Scheduled Ancient Monument which lies largely within Verulamium Park.

Today, St Peter's church is recognised by St Albans District Council as close to the modern Northern 'gateway' to the city at The Cricketers Public House (now Indian restaurant) and Stone Cross; other 'gateways' being present to the South, East and West of the city centre. This 'gateway' designation is the latest manifestation of gateways into the urban area which are described below in the history and archaeology section.



*Figure 7: The view from St Peter's tower looking South-South-West over Church Green, along St Peter's Street and to St Albans Abbey*

<sup>3</sup> This was the site of the manor house belonging to the Manor of Newlane Squillers. In the late 1600s it was owned by Robert Robotham, Lord of the Manor. In his will he left the house and considerable property to his niece Ann, who married John Rochford, the Vicar of St Peter's, and who leased out the house for her lifetime. That is the site of the Alms-houses.



St Albans is a commuter town, only about 32 kms (20 miles) North-North-West of central London and 18 kms (11 miles) South of Luton. Many inhabitants, including many of those living in St Peter's parish, commute into London by road or rail. The commuter town of Harpenden is only 6.4 kms (4 miles) to the North-West and the villages of Sandridge and Wheathampstead lie 3.2 kms (2 miles) and 6.4 kms (4 miles) respectively to the North-East.

## 2.2 The church and community

From its Saxon beginnings, St Peter's church was a rural foundation, located on the southern edge of a large rural area and close the centre of what subsequently became the town and the city of St Albans. It is probable that people have worshipped on this site for over 1,000 years. According to Matthew Paris, the 13th century chronicler of St Albans Abbey, the church was founded by the Saxon Abbot Wulsin, also known as Ulsinus, in AD 984. Subsequently, it became the parish church of the defended town of St Albans and is now located at the Northern edge of the historic heart of the city.

St Peter's church has always been at the heart of the city's life and in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was probably in much higher regard than the Abbey (the home of Benedictine monks) because of the conflicts between the townspeople and the Abbey over their rights as opposed to those of the Abbey, the major landowner. Many generations of townsfolk, especially well to do residents, are buried at St Peter's and the monuments inside and outside the church are an eloquent reminder of many centuries of community life.

There is a record of celebration, when, for example the Spanish Armada was defeated and the bells of St Peter's rang out over the community, as well as a record of achievement, as in the case of the memorial to Edward Strong for his stone masonry works at St Paul's Cathedral and many other notable, historic buildings. However, there is also a record of misery and suffering in this community, for example in story of the burials in the churchyard of soldiers from the Wars of the Roses in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, foundling babies in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the deaths of parishioners in various plagues. There is a long list of burials in 1578 from "the plague" and the inscription on a ledger stone at St Peter's reads

Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society (SAHAAS) UD). "Under this stone where now your eye you fix / Anne ARRIS lies who died in 66 / April 14 aetat 9 / Peste correpta / John ARRIS after / her his exit made / In 82 and here is / with her layd / Aged 8 year" (ST).

Today St Peter's church still functions as the Church of England parish church for the city of St Albans, as a local centre of mission and worship, of communal celebration and music and of silent contemplation and prayer. The church currently serves a predominantly white British community, a substantial minority of whom travel from neighbouring towns to worship. For example, some travel from Harpenden and nearby villages including Wheathampstead.

During normal times the church is open for worship each day and is staffed for most days of the year. The present pattern of regular worship as well as sermons are given on the church's own web site ([www.stpeterschurch.uk.com](http://www.stpeterschurch.uk.com)) which also provides a short history of the church. St Peter's is in the Diocese of St Albans (established 1540) and in the archdeaconry and deanery of the same name. The parish is currently served by the vicar Revd Mark Dearnley who is based in the vicarage in Hall Place Gardens beside the churchyard. At the time of writing, he is supported by Revd Alex Huzzey; Canon Margaret Tinsley, Pastoral Chaplain; Readers Richard Butler and Ruth Dearnley, and Associate Priests Revds Em Coley and Gill Keir. Margaret Blake is a Reader in training. The ministry team is supported by a vergers. There is also a small administrative staff, a Director of Music and an Assistant Organist.

In addition to its Christian worship and spiritual significance, the church has many community functions, including outreach, which support the cultural and social life of its congregations and the wider community making it of strong cultural and social significance in St Albans and beyond. An important part of the social and spiritual life of the church is its home groups which have grown in recent years.

As well as making contributions to national charities, St Peter's lends financial and other support to various local charities which have an important local role in supporting the vulnerable and needy. They include Rennie Grove Hospice, Open Door (for the homeless) and the Living Room (an

addiction recovery centre). The Church has connections with a number of nursing homes and charities including Strathmore nursing home, Davis Court and Beaumonds sheltered housing, Grove House Hospice and Camphill Village Trust which runs workshops and retail outlets within the Parish. Our vicar is an ex-officio Trustee of the Church Lands Trust, the United Alms-houses Trust, the Aid in Sickness Charity and the Cross Keys charity and is also Patron of St Paul's Church in St Albans.

St Peter's has a strong musical tradition and its choirs perform at services, weddings and festivals. The church is also a popular venue for a variety of lunchtime recitals and evening concerts which draw in relatively large numbers of classical music-lovers from far and wide. There are regular concerts by a range of different performers including chamber choirs, orchestras and individual recitalists. St Peter's is also one of the venues for the biennial St Albans International Organ Festival and competitions. The musical life of the church is enhanced by excellent acoustics and an impressive Mander organ installed in 2006, as well as a Vincent Morgan chamber organ and a Bosendorfer grand piano.

The church and its community provide a wide range of social activities for children and youths including a well-attended Messy Church (1-4 years, 30-40 children and parents; and 1-11 years, 40-60 children plus parents); Baby Time (0-4 years, 30 children plus parents); The Core (9-14 years, 5-10 children) and Youth Café, 15-18 years, 5-10 youths). Tea on Tuesdays is for the over 55s and has an average attendance of 40. At particular times of the year (e.g., Christmas Eve Evensong, some concerts and some funerals) the church can have up to 350 people attending, and numbers are also much higher than on average at services such as the Parish Requiem or at Easter. On Christmas Eve some of those attending may well have to stand through the service. The church has both active Book and a Theatre-going groups. The churchyard is the site of a Storytelling Circle and an occasional outdoor church is a centre for many other activities and groups as well as various festivals and fairs which are part of the St Albans Food and Drinks Festival and St Albans Literary Festival.

St Peter's is often at the centre of a major, annual spectacle in the cultural calendar of St Albans which involves a huge procession participated in by thousands of local people and tourists. This is the St Albans Pilgrimage procession which often begins at St Peter's and passes through the town centre to the Cathedral for the noon Eucharist. Another annual procession – the blessing of the farmer's market in St Peter's Street by the vicar of St Peter's – commences and finishes at St Peter's.

St Albans has a thriving cultural life, with regular concerts and theatre productions held at venues including St Peter's Themed Evensongs, Trestle Arts Base, St Albans Abbey, Maltings Arts Theatre, the Alban Arena, the Abbey Theatre, St Peter's Church and St Saviour's Church, given by numerous organisations including St Albans Bach Choir, St Albans Cathedral Choir, St Albans Cathedral Girls' Choir, St Albans Symphony Orchestra, St Albans Chamber Choir, St Albans Chamber Opera, The Company of Ten, St Albans Choral Society.

The parish provides leaflets to illustrate the history of the church and has created a churchyard trail with historical and ecological interpretation panels at key locations in the footpaths through the churchyard.

The Octagon room is in regular demand for meetings and events and currently the church is unable to satisfy demand for larger events and struggles to accommodate Messy Church because the Octagon room is not sufficiently large. The views from the tower are another popular attraction, increasing the footfall and providing a small source of revenue. The church benefits from revenue from long-term leases of space at St Peter's Institute and also from annual income from the Churchlands Trust which is an entirely separate charity from the church benefiting three churches: St Peter's, St Paul's and St Luke's.

The total resident population of St Albans in 2018 is estimated as 147,373 by the Local Government Association (UD) and stretches across over 6.99 square miles. It is difficult to estimate the size and current population of St Peter's parish, but in 2018 the modern-day ward of St Peter's was 128 ha in size and had a population of 8,846 (Local Government Association, UD). It is believed that the parish has a population of c.9,500 and c.5,000 households. St Peter's church is located at the Northern end of its parish which encompasses much of central St Albans and extends in a South-South-Easterly direction to the North Orbital road (Figure 8). Although residents to the North of the city centre, and those working within the city centre, might identify with St Peter's because of its prominence and proximity to them, those living and working on the Southern side of the city would now appear to have little geographical affinity with the church. However, the relationship between parish boundaries and the residential location of the current-day worshipping community of St Peter's is by no means close, as regular members of the current-day worshipping community often reside beyond the parish boundaries in locations including

Harpenden, Wheathampstead, Bricket Wood and North London, as well as within it.



Figure 8: St Peter's parish boundaries

The church welcomes a relatively large number of visitors each year, an increasing number of which appear to be tourists. Visitor numbers are likely to increase as St Albans is attracting more tourists and has recently added two large hotels very close to St Peter's in St Peter's Street (Travelodge and Premier Inn). In the past five years (2015-20), those regularly worshipping; those attending Easter and Christmas services; and weddings, baptisms and funerals have all been in decline compared with the earlier part of the 2010-20 decade (<https://portal.stalbans.anglican.org/>). However, when less traditional forms of participation are taken into account, numbers appear to be holding up.

St Peter's 5-year, Vision and Mission Action Plan (2019) sees the church as a church for the city and lays extra emphasis on outward reach, retaining and building on the work already done to foster a prayerful community and using this as a base from which to seek to be transformational within the wider community.

In normal times, the church therefore fulfils the following often overlapping functions, presently housed in these parts of the church or north transept and Octagon Room:

- Worship and parish ministry
- Public events and large services
- Messy church Children's Sunday school
- Tourism
- Meetings bookings
- Concerts
- Choir rehearsals
- Musical examination
- Organ and piano tuition

## 2.2.1 Other churches and places of worship close to St Peter's

St Albans has a number of churches which are within one to two kilometres of St Peter's including St Albans Abbey, Dagnall Street Baptist Church, Marlborough Road Methodist Church, St Paul's and St Luke's churches, the Roman Catholic Church of St Bartholomew, the Salvation Army church, Trinity URC and the Spicer Street Independent Evangelical church.

Closest to St Peter's – a two-minute walk away to the north – the protestant, Christian, Seventh-day Adventist Church built in 1980-81. This is an entirely modern, brick and concrete construction with a sharply pitched metallic roof.

St Saviour's is a Church of England church five minutes' walk North-East of St Peter's. It is the parish church for the Bernards Heath area of St Albans, and pastorally serves the Marshalswick South Ward. Established originally as a daughter church of St Leonard's in the village of Sandridge (which was originally part of St Peter's parish) during the city's expansion in the Victorian era, St Saviour's has always been in the Anglo-Catholic tradition of Anglican spirituality and worship. This Grade II listed church is of locally produced, red-orange brick which contrasts with Ancaster stone dressings. The gable roof is tiled. It has a precisely detailed exterior, in perpendicular gothic, by William Woodward in 1902. It has a stately aisled interior with red brick columns, steeply pointed arcades and a vaulted crossing with detailed brick and stone ribs. The interior has high quality church furniture including the chancel reredos by W.J.Tapper, Lady Chapel reredos and screen by Martin Travers, Rood Screen by Frank Peck and Chancel window by Gaetano Meo, all renowned architects and artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Historic England: [Church of Saint Saviour , St. Albans - 1392600 Historic England](#))

Dagnall Street Baptist Church is about a ten minute walk from St Peter's. It is a city-centre church with a 360-year history. The red brick church building dates from 1884-85 and was designed by Morton M. Glover.

Another ten-minute walk from St Peter's is Marlborough Road Methodist Church. St Peter's has joined with this church under the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. The church is of Gothic design, constructed in red brick and stone with a tiled roof. It has a central tower through which a staircase leads to a gallery. The architects were Messrs Gordon, Lowther and Gunton of London and the work was carried out by Ezra Dunham, a local builder and one of the Trustees of the Chapel. The church opened in 1898.

## 2.2.2 People and place; personalities associated with the church and St Albans

### *King Offa of Mercia (757-796)*

Although Wulsin (Ulsinus) is reputed to have founded St Peter's church it is entirely possible that a church existed on the present site prior to his influence. Offa of Mercia was a pious king and a generous patron of the church. He set up a number of churches and monasteries, including St Albans Abbey and the Benedictine monastery there. He dedicated many of the churches to St Peter. Although Butler (2013) says that it is unverifiable, he suggests that Offa may have founded the church in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century around the time that he endowed St Albans Abbey.

### *Wulsin (Ulsinus)*

Wulsin was the 6<sup>th</sup> Abbot of St Albans Abbey, and according to the Matthew Paris, he founded St Peter's church in AD 984. There are, however, discrepancies in this date and when Wulsin is believed to have lived and been Abbot. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Carruthers, 2013, 87-91) says that Offa fought near the town of Bensington in AD 775 and that he died in AD 794. On the other hand, Toms (1993) suggests that he was Abbot around 860-870. These dates would put the date of the foundation of the church around 780 or 860. Whenever it was that he lived, Wulsin was clearly a visionary and planned the beginnings of the settlement of St Albans. He created its earliest market and then enlarged it into what is now St Peter's Street. He created three churches, including St Peter's on the main roads

leading to the Abbey. He has also been credited with founding St Albans school.

### *The St Peter's Anchoresses 4*

During the abbacy of John de Hertford in 1258 there is a mention of anchoress at St Peter's church. This is how it was described in the Abbey Chronicle:

"In the time of Abbot John at St Peter's church in the town of St Albans there was a most holy recluse who was accustomed to see not only visions in her sleep but also to hear oracles from heaven about the future. And one night she saw standing by her side in the parlour a venerable aged, bearded figure, who then in his torment went away from her, climbed the tower of the church and, turning his face towards the town, thundered from his mouth in grim and threatening tones the words, 'Woe! Woe! Woe! Upon all the people of England.' When he had repeated these words several times, he disappeared. But soon in that same year the crops failed and animals perished and there arose so great a famine that in the town of London fifteen thousand people died of hunger (Clark and Preest, 2019)".

In 1410 an Anchoress of St. Peter's named Alice, was admitted into the fraternity of St. Alban's Abbey. While staying with all his Court at the Abbey in 1458, Henry VI visited the Anchoress. The Wills of the Archdeaconry of St. Albans to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century reveal that there continued to be an Anchoress residing within the precincts of St Peter's. Bequests were frequently made to her (Carey Morgan, 1899). Robert Growle's will, dated 18<sup>th</sup> August 1456, describes the anchoress as within the precincts of St. Peter's churchyard. Carey Morgan (1899, 140) surmises that the anchoress could have inhabited the Chapel of St Appollonia which was constructed in St Peter's churchyard and to which legacies were left.

According to the Abbey Chronicle, the existence of an anchoress at St Peter's was mentioned again in 1479/80. After King Edward IV and his queen, Elizabeth, petitioned Abbot William of Wallingford, he admitted Elizabeth Katherine Holsted as anchoress (Riley, 1873). In a book about St Albans wills (Flood, 1993) reference is made to several documents in which money was left to the anchoress of St Peter's. For example, the will of Robert Exmew, gentleman, written on 20 May 1487 included the sentence: "I bequeath to the ancores of

<sup>4</sup> Source: St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society:  
<https://www.stalbanshistory.org/Anchoresses>

[and Isolation at St Peter's Church | Epidemics and isolation | St Albans History](#)

Seint Michel 3s 4d and to the ancrs of Seint Petres 3s 4d”.

### ***Sir Richard Lee (1501/2-75)***

Sir Richard Lee was a military engineer and a favourite of King Henry VIII. He spent the late 1530s and early 1540s improving the fortifications of Calais for which he gained approval from the king. When the king suppressed Sopwell Priory in St Albans during the Dissolution he granted the monastery site to Lee, who promptly tore down the buildings and used the stone to build an opulent Tudor manor on the site. The ruins of his manor house may still be clearly seen. The king also granted the buildings of the Abbey monastery, but not the Abbey church itself, with all the surrounding land to Lee but he subsequently sold the site to Richard Boreman and his heirs. Lee was for a long time in conflict over land with Sir Ralph Rowlett, a rich man and rival aspirant to the social primacy in St. Albans and both were subsequently removed from the Hertfordshire bench because of their quarrelling. By the time of his death, Lee had accumulated five manors and more than 14,000 acres in Hertfordshire, most of them around St. Albans (Bindoff, 1982). Lee's grave is at the east end of St Peter's church. His funerary armour is now part of the permanent collection of St Albans Museums. The helmet is a well-known, and much-loved, item, in relatively good condition, but the mail is in too poor a condition to display and relegated to permanent storage.

### ***Roger Pemberton (1554-1627)***

Roger Pemberton was educated at St John's College, Cambridge, from where he matriculated in 1612. He married Elizabeth Moore in 1579 and their three sons and three daughters were baptised at St Peter's. The family are delightfully portrayed in an embossed memorial slab (which is a copy of the original) in the church. The Pembertons were strongly Puritan and believed that giving to the poor ensured their place in heaven. In his will written in 1624, Roger provided for an alms-house for six poor old widows to be erected in what was then Bowgate (now the northern part of St Peter's Street) opposite St Peter's church. In his will he described in meticulous detail how the alms-houses were to be established and administered. The first residents were admitted in 1629 and the alms-houses are still in use today. The vicar and churchwardens of St Peter's are trustees (SAHAAS, Undated).

### ***Edward Strong (c.1652-1723)***

The history of Edward and the dynasty of the Strong stonemasons is one of the most interesting stories of personalities related to St Peter's Church (Appendix

1). Edward Strong was a master stonemason who worked for Sir Christopher Wren on the building of St Paul's Cathedral, London from the 1670s until its completion in 1710. He is responsible for the stonework of dozens of London churches, the Royal Hospital at Greenwich and the façade of Blenheim Palace. He also provided and constructed the stonework on a range of other houses including some in the St Albans area where he lived later in life. Ivy House, directly opposite St Peter's Church, may have been constructed by Edward Strong. Romeland House near St Albans Abbey is another one of Edward Strong's constructions. The largest, and arguably most ornate, memorial in St Peter's church is to Edward Strong and members of his family.

### ***Dr Nathaniel Cotton (d.1788)***

A simple slab in St Peter's churchyard is inscribed 'Here are deposited the remains of Ann, Hannah and Nathaniel Cotton'. Dr Cotton is not well known locally but this is probably his own making since, as this brief inscription suggests, he was a very private man. His works were entitled "Observations on a particular kind of scarlet fever that lately prevailed in and about St Albans" published in 1749 and 'Visions in Verse for the Entertainment and Instruction of Younger Minds', which was published anonymously in 1751. He was a poet and pioneer in the treatment of mental illness. He had a medical practice and founded an asylum for mentally disturbed patients, called 'Collegium Insanorum' in St Albans. In 1763 one of his patients, who suffered from depression, was the poet William Cowper. His seven children by his first wife Ann, who died in 1749, and three by his second wife Hannah were all christened at St Peter's Church and his eldest son became a Church of England vicar (Jones, 1936).

### ***Sir Edmund Denison Beckett, later Lord Grimthorpe (1816-1905)***

Beckett was born near Newark in Nottinghamshire and was the eldest son of Sir Edmund Beckett, 4<sup>th</sup>

Baronet, Member of Parliament for the West Riding of Yorkshire (Ferriday, 1957). As Toms (1962, 162) writes he was "a most remarkable character, who

knew he was a good lawyer but thought he was an even better architect, and clockmaker".

In 1851, he designed the mechanism for the clock of the Palace of Westminster which is responsible for



the chimes of Big Ben. In 1868 he worked with W. H. Crossland to design St Chad's Church in Leeds on land given by his family. However, in the 1880s and 1890s, and at his own expense, he took on the rebuilding of the West front, roof and transept windows in St Albans Abbey cathedral. At this time the Abbey building was in need of repair and work had already been undertaken by Sir George Gilbert Scott until he died in 1878. Beckett worked on making the central tower safe, correcting the leaning South side of the nave and reconstructing the shrine of St Alban. However, his robust approach altered the Abbey's character and inspired the popular opinion at that time that "to grimthorpe" meant to carry out unsympathetic restorations of ancient buildings. One of the statues around the West door of the Abbey has Beckett's face.

Beckett went on, again at his own expense, to restore both St Michael's and St Peter's churches turning St Peter's into a Victorian Gothic-style building.

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Many other persons are buried or commemorated in the church or churchyard. The histories of some of them have been researched. An example is James Brown (1750-1839) whose tomb can be found in the churchyard close to the side of the North extension (Morris and Merrick, 2014).

## 2.3 Description of the building(s) and site

This section contains a summary of the interconnected history and archaeology of the town, church and churchyard. A more detailed account of the history and archaeology of the town and church is contained in Appendix 2. This section then proceeds to describe the church and churchyard as they are today, attempting to be as comprehensive and holistic as possible without going into great detail. The sections on the interior of the church are not intended to be an inventory but rather to serve as a platform from which the significance of the church can be subsequently assessed.

### 2.3.1 The history and archaeology of St Albans and St Peter's church

To understand the origins of St Peter's church it is necessary to go back to Roman Verulamium – the forerunner of St Albans. Here it is believed that a

Roman citizen named Alban was martyred. He is believed to have been executed on the hill on the North-Eastern side of the River Ver on which St Albans Abbey now stands, overlooking the remains of Roman Verulamium. Over time the shrine of Saint Alban in the Abbey became a major magnet for Christian pilgrims from far and wide. The Saxon Abbot, Wulsin (Ulsinus) then founded three pilgrim churches on the major roads leading to the Abbey where a Benedictine monastery stood. St Peter's church is reputed to have been built by Wulsin in AD 984, although there is some controversy over this date. The other pilgrim churches are St Michael's and St Stephen's.

St Albans is remarkable because of over two thousand years of continuous development. In establishing these three pilgrim churches and a market to the immediate North-East of the Abbey precinct, Wulsin established the trading town of St Albans. In approximately one thousand years, St Albans had been, successively, an Iron Age tribal capital (see below), one of the most important cities of Roman Britain, a defended, flourishing Saxon settlement called Kingsbury, and a major medieval religious and monastic town. The core of these settlements had moved in an Easterly and North-Easterly direction from a plateau above the Ver, onto the slopes of the Ver and then to the other side of the Ver up onto a hill on which the Abbey and St Albans now stand, where Alban was martyred. St Peter's church was established by Wulsin at the Northern gateway to the early medieval town, at the highest point in St Albans to the North of the Abbey and the present-day market, and the furthest away from the Iron Age settlement.

Wheeler's excavations in the 1930s found evidence of a Belgic settlement on a plateau to the South-West of the site of the Roman town of Verulamium (Wheeler and Wheeler, 1936). This settlement was probably occupied in the very late pre-Roman Iron Age (e.g., 10 BC - AD 10) by the Catuvallauni tribe. The Catuvallauni subsequently occupied a pre-conquest settlement called Verlamio lower down on the South-Western slopes of the River Ver valley where the Roman city of Verulamium developed after about AD 44-45 (Nisbett and Thompson, 2005).

Verulamium is a major archaeological site and Scheduled Ancient Monument. A large portion of the Roman city remains unexcavated, being now park and agricultural land, though some has been built upon. The ancient Watling Street passed through the city. As a town, Verulamium was succeeded by the Saxon town of Kingsbury which arose on the North-Eastern side of the River Ver from the Roman city. Kingsbury was defended by earthen ramparts. The date of its foundation is

unknown but it may have been established by Offa. When Wulsin began to develop St Albans, Kingsbury was a flourishing town. However, according to the *Gesta Abbatum* (Paris, 1259), Kingsbury was levelled in the 11<sup>th</sup> century when the vaulted passageways and subterranean crypts of Verulamium were filled up as they were the hiding place of robbers and other miscreants.

Paul of Caen was appointed as the first Norman abbot of St Albans Abbey after the Norman invasion. The Saxon Abbey and monastery were reformed and the Abbey buildings torn down and replaced by a grand new Abbey constructed of tile, brick and stone from the ruins of Verulamium (Clutterbuck, 1815; Toms, 1962). No records exist of St Peter's during this period and for nearly 200 years after its foundation (Carey-Morgan 1899).

Whereas St Albans is rich in archaeological evidence, very limited archaeological evidence exists for St Peter's church and churchyard. The church, especially the West end, was partly rebuilt in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Carey Morgan, 1899) and it was from the late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century that it probably assumed the form which it retained until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is a cruciform shaped building with a central tower. The existence of a central tower in 1254 may be deduced from a record that lightning damaged it in that year (Carey Morgan, 1899).

From the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, St Albans was well defended, though probably not by walls, and by 1327 these defences incorporated ditches around at least parts of the town, as well as bars at entrances in the defences. St Peter's church and churchyard were just inside the Tonman ditch, which probably crossed just beyond the North-East corner of the churchyard, and close to one of the barred entrances to the town in Bowgate (the Northern section of St Peter's Street) (Niblett and Thompson, 2005). During the 12<sup>th</sup> century a Nunnery was built in Sopwell, a part of St Peter's parish. When the Nunnery was dissolved in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Sir

Richard Lee, who is buried in St Peter's church, was granted the site and built a substantial house upon it, the ruins of which can clearly be seen today.

Between 1335 and 1349 there was a good deal of church building at St Peter's. However, little is known about the fabric of the Norman church mainly because, during the major alterations at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Lord Grimthorpe, little was recorded. At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, "from

the architectural indications it seems clear that the nave was entirely rebuilt from the foundations, excepting the west and south doors" (Carey Morgan, 1899 141). Archaeological investigations in 1981 on the North side of the church revealed the foundations of the North transept dated as late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century (Niblett and Thompson, 2005 287; SAHAAS Council minutes 4 December 1981). Baskerfield's drawings of the church before 1803 (Carey Morgan, 1899) appear to show 14<sup>th</sup> century windows in the chancel and South transept (Page,



*Figure 9: St Peter's church prior to the alterations of 1803, from the east (from sketches in Thomas Baskerfield's Collection in the British Museum)*

1908, 419) in line with a 14<sup>th</sup> century date for excavated North transept (Figures 9 and 10). The late medieval rebuilding of the Eastern end of the church is confirmed by observations made when the transepts and chancel were demolished in 1802-3 by those undertaking the work (Carey Morgan 1899; Niblett and Thompson, 2005 287).

In 1381, the Great Revolt led by Wat Tyler, led to the St Peter's vicar's books being burned by rioters. As a result, many of the townspeople were executed. The Clock Tower built opposite the Waxhouse Gate to the Abbey precinct was built between 1403 and 1412 a generation after the unsuccessful uprising. Its location directly opposite the Abbey entrance can be viewed as an act of defiance. It had a curfew bell and clock to regulate the marketplace and daily life of the town.



*Figure: 10 St Peter's church prior to the alterations of 1803, from the south (from sketches in Thomas Baskerfield's Collection in the British Museum)*

During the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, St Peter's assigned graveyard space to St Andrew's. By then St Peter's had become the church of the town with transepts and a long eastern arm (Niblett and Thompson, 2005, 287). At the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, two small chapels existed in St Peter's churchyard (Carey Morgan, 1899). They are described below in the section on St Peter's churchyard. From the evidence of wills and to what he refers to as archaeological evidence, Carey Morgan (1899, 141) states that "it seems clear that the nave was entirely re-built from the foundations, excepting the west and south doors, at the end of that century."

St Albans was the site of two major battles in the War of the Roses (Burley et al., 2007). In the first Battle of St Albans in 1455, fighting between the Lancastrians and Yorkists took place in the marketplace in St Peter's Street. In the second Battle in 1461 some of the fighting took place opposite the church. Local folklore is that bodies of the common people from both battles are buried in St Peter's churchyard, although there is no archaeological evidence to support this story (Burley et al., 2007, 142-4, Niblett and Thompson, 2005).

The existence of the churchwarden's accounts between 1573 and 1603 provides evidence exists which throws light on the upkeep of the fabric of St Peter's (Palmer, 1985). The work undertaken at St Peter's appears to have been principally essential maintenance to address defects which appeared in the church, steeple or wall. Smith and North (2003, 78) observe that the church walls, roof and north aisle were in need of serious repair – the latter being in a ruinous state by 1670.

The period 1536–1541 witnessed momentous change, not only in St Albans but across the country. Newcombe (1793) gives a detailed account of the dissolution of the monasteries and the break-up of the St Albans Abbey estates after the Abbey surrendered in December 1539. This was the end of the Benedictine monastery of St Albans. Most of the buildings were destroyed and Richard Lee, who is buried in St Peter's church, was granted much of the land (Toms, 1962) but subsequently sold it.

Just prior to the Commonwealth period in 1643, Romanistic inferences in the church's windows, works of art and graves were wantonly destroyed by

St Peter's vicar. Then in 1645 five hundred officers and 5,000 prisoners captured during the Civil War were brought directly to London via St. Albans from Naseby. Some of these prisoners spent one or more nights imprisoned in St Peter's church as evidenced by an entry in the churchwarden's accounts (Carey-Morgan, 1899). Subsequently, the Royalists were defeated at Colchester and prisoners were marched to Bristol, again through St Albans. According to another entry in the churchwarden's vestry records, many of these prisoners were also confined in the church during their journey (Carey-Morgan, 1899).

On 21 November 1801 the whole of the belfry inside the masonry tower collapsed into the church bringing to an end fifty years of argument about what should be done to render the deteriorating tower and church safe. The timber supports of the pillars of the tower had steadily degenerated. A new brick tower with a height of 67 feet was erected and "thrown into the churchyard" and the chancel shortened so much that it barely existed (Figures 11, 12 and 13). From then until the present day an inner staircase replaced the one attached to the exterior of the tower above the ringing chamber (Figure 10).

The transepts were demolished and, according to Clutterbuck (1827, Vol. 1, 117), St Peter's has been without transepts<sup>5</sup> so that the cruciform ground plan

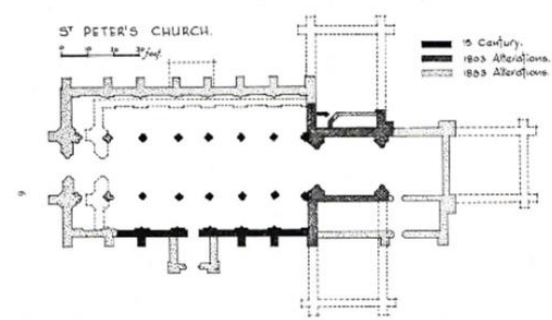


Figure 11: The alterations to St Peter's church in 1803 and 1893 showing the 15<sup>th</sup> century nave arcade pillars and the south wall of the nave. The unshaded parts show the outline of the church as it was from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (from Carey Morgan, 1899)

<sup>5</sup> The wall plaque on the Chancel wall beside the doorway to the corridor that leads to the Octagon and associated parish rooms which were constructed in the early 1980s, refers to them as a transept.

However, it is arguable that the corridor forms a transept and in this document this entire building is referred to as an extension.



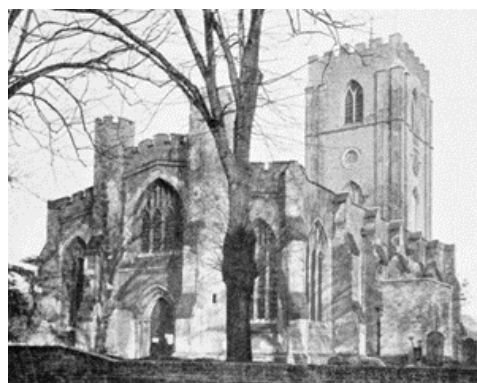
*Figure 12: St Peter's 'stub' chancel (1803-93)*

of the medieval church has no longer existed above ground (Figure 10). Unfortunately, this restoration undertaken in 1803 removed evidence about the earlier history of the church without recording it.



*Figure 13: Another view of the church and its 'stub' chancel prior to the restoration of 1893.*

The structure of the church remained much the same during most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although, once again, it fell into ruinous disrepair. In 1893 Lord Grimthorpe controversially decided to restore St Peter's church at his own expense. He started a major rebuilding campaign in St Albans in the 1890s and is best known for his extreme restoration of St Alban's Abbey in 1880-85. At St Peter's, Grimthorpe's restoration rebuilt the chancel and extended outwards the West and North nave walls, replacing the 13<sup>th</sup> century West door with a very similar door (Figures 10, 14 and 15).



*Figure 14: The West end and tower of the church before the 1893 restoration*



*Figure 15: The West end and tower of the church after the 1893 restoration*

The shape of the porch around the South door of the church was altered and the vestries on the South side of the church also date from this restoration. The tower gained pinnacles. He also raised the height of the roof of the nave but left the sites of the transepts and the East end of the chancel untouched (Niblett and Thompson, 2005). Regrettably, Grimthorpe did not commission any archaeological investigations during his restoration and so the opportunity to shed light on the early history of the church through archaeological evidence was lost. Grimthorpe had a particularly robust and comprehensive approach to his church restorations. Some condemn his approach and its lasting impact although, as Reynolds (1987,7) points out, without his money and efforts the church might have continued to be a ruin. Though the extent of the restoration may be criticised, the building work has provide to be of good quality.



Figure 16 shows the interior of the nave looking towards the West end before Grimthorpe's alterations of 1893. At the West end there is an organ, acquired by the church in 1723, which sits on a gallery reached by stairs on either side of the door. Grimthorpe's 1893 restoration moved the West end Westwards by one nave arcade bay and the organ and gallery were dismantled. The organ was relocated to the North side of the chancel <sup>6</sup> (Morris 2017)

The plan of the medieval town with St Peter's close to its centre, is still highly visible today with the town centred on an elongated triangular marketplace beside the Abbey precinct where the three main roads from the pilgrim churches meet.



Figure 16: The West end of the nave before the 1893 restoration

Medieval St Albans grew initially close to the Abbey entrance into French Row, with some tenements huddled against the Abbey precinct wall on the south side. Existing narrow alleyways are fossilised remnants of passages between market stalls. The long narrow burgage plots behind the main street frontages along St Peter's Street are another medieval feature.

Archaeological evidence of the town's development is sparse compared with that of Roman Verulamium. However, archaeological evidence of the medieval defences has been found in various sites (Nisbett and Thompson, 2005, 268-272). By end of 14<sup>th</sup> century development had extended up St Peter's Street beyond Chequer St, Market St and French Row to Bowgate opposite St Peter's church.

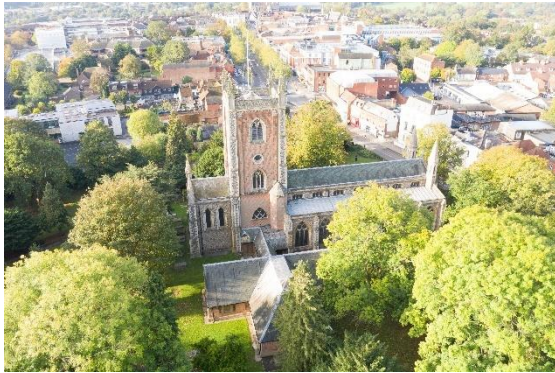
The population of St Albans in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is estimated to have been around 3,200 (Smith and North, 2003). St Albans was a significant gentry town during the 18<sup>th</sup> century with a population of perhaps 3,500. Londoners seeking fresh air were attracted to the town. Also, partly because it was on the main road from London to the Midlands, Holyhead and the Northwest, the town prospered. It became a major, daily stagecoach thoroughfare with stagecoaches regularly thundering along St Peter's Street and past St Peter's church. It also became a stopping place and a "town chiefly of inn and victual houses" (Smith and North, 2003, 142). In 1796 London Road was rebuilt to facilitate this traffic. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the population of St Albans was less than 4,000 but it quadrupled by 1900 as silk and cotton mill and other industries grew.

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the arrival of three railways meant the end of the stagecoaches but it led to a rapid rise in the population of the city and the need for more churches, several of which were planted by St Peter's thereby reducing the size of the parish. St Albans became a city on 28 August 1877 and today has a population of approximately 150,000 (Local Government Association, UD). The town developed rapidly with terraces and factories of the industrial Victorians and redevelopment with modern industries and housing has continued up to the present day.

In the late 1970s/early 1980s the parish decided that the facilities of the church needed extending to incorporate a council room and parish rooms. A single storey Northern extension comprising a corridor leading to parish rooms and the Octagon

<sup>6</sup> In 1948 the Dallam organ was replaced and located on the South side of the chancel. However, the acoustics were problematic and so it was moved to the North aisle of the nave.

meeting room was constructed and opened in 1983 (Figure 17).



*Figure 17: The church and the early 1980s modern 'bungalow style' extension on the North side*

St Albans is particularly special in that many periods of history are represented today in a multi-layered built environment which gives a strong sense of history, significance and character to the city. Buildings representing these periods range from the early modern periods to Georgian mansions,

timber-framed vernacular of the late-medieval and of Victorian-artisan dwellings and 20<sup>th</sup> century estates. The centre of St Albans is an area richly diverse in both appearance and uses, with a physical environment that reflects hundreds of years of development.

### **2.3.2 St Peter's churchyard**

Nisbett and Thompson (2005, 288) describe the churchyard as a large, late medieval churchyard. It would have been larger than it is at present because from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards it served the whole town. Nisbett and Thompson (2005, 288) state that human remains have been found beyond the churchyard limits in the grounds of Hall Place on the northern side of the churchyard. Whether the churchyard extended southwards beyond its existing boundary is unknown although bones reputed to be of human origin were found many years ago when the cellar of the Cock Inn, on the corner of Hatfield Road and St Peter's Street – about 80 metres south of the current churchyard wall - was being excavated to make it deeper.

Hardly any archaeological work has been undertaken. A number of structures in the churchyard are documented historically (Carey Morgan, 1899). Among them is the cross carved by Roger de Stoke in 1342, a small hermitage occupied by an anchoress from the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century at least, an undated Cornwall Chapel and a Charnel Chapel. The churchyard is where the victims of the two Battles of St Albans are supposedly buried but no mass burial site has ever been found.

The Charnel Chapel was located in the South-West corner of the existing churchyard. It was also called the Corner Chapel. This was officially the chapel of the Fraternity of All Saints founded after the revolt in 1381. The South wall of the churchyard from the corner with St Peter's Street, where the main church sign is now located, to the South gateway to the churchyard is the wall of this chapel which otherwise no longer exists. This is known because a vestry order in 1751 implied this. A fragment of a return at the base of the West wall of the churchyard has also been found. The chapel is presumed to have

been demolished in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Nisbett and Thompson, 2005, 288).

No other archaeological evidence exists for the churchyard but there is historical documentation regarding Roger de Stoke's cross which lasted until at least 1533. It is mentioned in the Will of John Laverock of that year. This cross was credited with miracles and St Peter's vicar at that time – William Puffe – was fined by the Consistory Court for having appropriated offerings drawn by the cross.

The other chapel was named Cornwall's Chapel and probably adjoined Roger de Stoke's cross. Numerous parishioners gave legacies to these chapels during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as revealed by the records of wills (Flood, 1993). Newcombe (1793, 501) records that when the Reformation took place the incumbent of the large parish of St Peter's was considered to be "well provided without any grant of tithes, because the offerings at the altar were abundant and valuable; insomuch, that the infirmity was formerly maintained and supplied from them". He goes on to record that when the Popish religion and worship was abolished, the offerings diminished.

There are many graves in St Peter's churchyard. Among them are about forty foundling babies buried in unmarked graves, probably on the North side of the churchyard. The pauper babies were from Thomas Coram's London Foundling Hospital for abandoned and destitute children who died between 1757-60. They are recorded in St Peter's burial and baptism registers for the years 1558-1812.

### 2.3.3 Timeline

The salient dates in the development of the church fabric (NB This timeline is reproduced as Appendix 3 incorporating information on the sources used).

10<sup>th</sup> century: Reputed foundation of St Peter's. Original floor plan probably marked by line of the present nave arcade up to the most Westerly columns.

13<sup>th</sup> century: Earlier West wall and doorway constructed in the position of the present most westerly columns.

Unknown: Original chancel of 12.19 metres (40 feet) in length.

Late 12<sup>th</sup>/early 13<sup>th</sup> century: Tower constructed, 3.06 metres (33 feet square)

Late 13<sup>th</sup>/early 14<sup>th</sup> century: North and South transepts built out from tower crossing.

Early 14<sup>th</sup> century: Charnel chapel founded at South-West corner of churchyard

Early 15<sup>th</sup> century: Nave arcade constructed in its present form, on Saxon foundations. North porch entrance to nave demolished 1893.

1725: Gallery erected at West end to receive the 1660 Ralph Dallam organ from the Chapel Royal, Windsor.

1728: Private oratories (one in the South aisle and one in the North) existed at this time, subsequently removed.

1756: Tower arches removed and loftier ones inserted, ringing room floor raised to improve perspective view of the chancel from the nave.

1785: Tower underpinned with timber.

1799: Bells removed and top of tower taken down in view of parlous state of the tower.

1801: Belfry floor and temporary tower roof collapsed.

1803: 1803/4 Demolition and rebuilding. Both transepts and chancel demolished and materials auctioned. Former transept openings into crossing sealed up. Stub chancel built in brick (with the exception of the East face). Many old memorials believed lost at this time. Present tower erected and rendered in rough cast to match rest of church.

1830s: Gas lighting presumed to have been installed.

c.1850 New replacement pews introduced to the centre of the nave.

1863: Pulpit by J. A. Goyers of Louvain installed, initially to the South of the chancel arch and later moved to present position.

1893: 15<sup>th</sup> Century nave wall North demolished and present wall erected four feet further north to widen the aisle. North porch and entrance demolished. West wall and doorway demolished and present West wall and turrets built a bay further West with new rose window. West bay of arcade added to nave. Gallery demolished and organ moved to North side of choir chancel. 1803 stub Chancel demolished and present Chancel erected. Nave roof raised to present height from position indicated by decorated corbels and chevron cill on tower wall. Clerestory windows added. Rough cast render removed from all external facings to reveal present brick or flint facings and stone quoins. Nave floor raised to present level.

1905: Chancel Screen erected. Oak panelling in present choir chapel. Font moved.

1931: Electric light installed.

1945: New heating system. Organ rebuilt and extended to South side of present choir chapel on girders over old choir vestry as well as North side.

1948: Bishop & Son electro-pneumatic organ installed on South side of chancel. Lady Chapel screen erected. Lady Chapel altar rail installed. Oak panelling of South wall of Lady Chapel.

1955: Font moved.

1972: Re-wiring and new lighting.

1975: Bishop & Son organ with movable console installed at east end of North aisle. Pews removed from front of nave to create choir chapel.

1982: New boiler house erected and boiler linked to existing system. Churchyard to North cleared ready for building of extension. Northern extension comprising corridor, office, library, WCs, choir vestry, library, storage, kitchen and Octagonal meeting room erected.

1984: Car park on South side of churchyard created. Existing footpath widened.

1993: Font moved. Drop-in central section added to existing high altar communion rails.

1995: Wooden doors of lobby at West end removed. Replaced by etched glass doors.

1998: New lighting system installed.

2005: New Mander organ installed in the place of the 1975 organ. Octagon Kitchen upgraded.

2008: Chancel re-roofed.

2013: Office area created within the existing 'library'.

2018: Church lighting upgraded.

2019: Boiler replaced and lavatories modernised to include an accessible toilet.

2020: The two vestries on the South side of the church completely refurbished and mezzanine floor and staircase added.

2021: Kitchen extended, Octagon room altered.

A timeline of events at St Peter's is presented in Appendix 5.

## 2.4 Description of exterior

### 2.4.1 Ground Plan

The building we see today is aligned approximately from North-West to South-East. It consists of a seven bay, aisled nave with lowered South and North aisles, the North aisle being wider than the one

on the South. There are two main porches and entrances, one South and one West. The Chancel lies to the South-East of, and is narrower than, the nave (Figure 18). There are no transepts, just a North extension comprising a glazed corridor linking parish rooms to the church. There are two vestries on the South side of the chancel one of which now has a mezzanine floor.

The pinnacled, crossing tower is above the chancel and contains a bellringers chamber, a storage level and a belfry accessible by a spiral staircase and wooden steps. The parish rooms were added in 1982. They comprise a library/meeting room, the church offices, the choir vestry, lavatories, a kitchen and small-to-medium sized events/meeting room named the Octagon (Figure 19).

### Approximate dimensions:

The nave and aisles measures 28m x 15m = 420m<sup>2</sup>. The chancel and vestries combined measures 16m x 11m = 176m<sup>2</sup>. Tower measures 6m x 6m (included in chancel measurements) is c. 60m in height. Total internal floor area measures 596m<sup>2</sup>. Nave roof is c. 20m height.

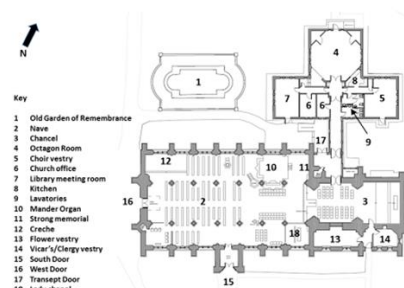


Figure 18: Ground plan of St Peter's church with key to principal areas and facilities

A little medieval work remains in the 13<sup>th</sup> century doorway and the 15<sup>th</sup> century nave arcades and corbels. The tower is a rebuilding using bond red brick following the collapse of the previous one in 1801. Despite its fine medieval, Perpendicular nave arcades, the church building is in most respects a post-medieval, Victorian Gothic-style structure, the invention of the city's late 19<sup>th</sup> century amateur



architect. The church is constructed in load bearing brickwork and stone and faced in flint with brick facings and limestone dressings. The large, pinnaced tower is in soft English bond red brick. Red brick is used for the parish rooms. The roof is of green Westmorland slate.

The chancel has large clasping buttresses terminating in large conical ashlar pinnacles. The East window is Perpendicular and has five lights and above there is a lobed trefoil in the gable. In the chancel, side windows there are large lancets with shafts.

The South-East vestry has segmental-headed two-light traceried windows and coped parapet. The red brick crossing tower has clasping flint and ashlar buttresses which terminate in four large, cricketed, conical pinnacles and a pierced, corbelled parapet.

In the lower part of the tower there are three-light Perpendicular traceried windows with roll-moulded

tracery. Above come roundels with moulded frames, Y-tracery belfry windows. There is a projecting North-West polygonal stair turret to the lower stage and there is a clock face on the South side of the tower.

To the aisles there are buttresses with setoffs and gables, and coped parapets. The nave has a clerestory with three-light uncusped windows under Tudor arches. At the West end of the nave there are polygonal North and South turrets with buttresses terminating in large conical pinnacles.

To the aisles there are buttresses with setoffs and gables, and coped parapets. The nave has a clerestory with three-light uncusped windows under Tudor arches. At the West end of the nave there are polygonal North and South turrets with buttresses terminating in large conical pinnacles.

There is a very large West rose window above a small moulded West doorway installed by Lord Grimthorpe. The lean-to aisles have large West end



*Figure 19: Corridor leading to North extension*

lancets. In the broader North aisle there are large windows with Victorian curvilinear decorated tracery whereas the narrower South aisle has originally medieval Perpendicular windows of three lights although the stonework has been renewed.

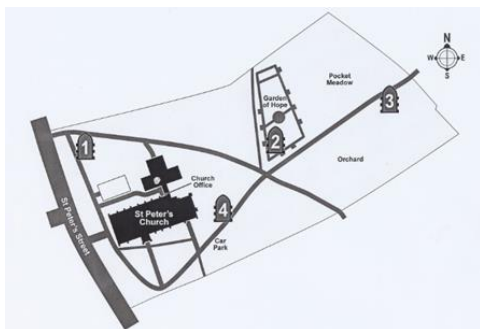
The South porch has a step tiled roof and clasping buttresses and a moulded outer doorway. The inner doorway dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and has nook shafts with moulded capitals linked to a stoup with a stone frame with a brattished cornice.

The modern North extension corridor, glazed on both sides, connects to the chancel via a doorway adjacent to the entrance to the staircase to the tower. The corridor leads to the modern Octagon room (Figure 19) with its octagonal roof lights.

## **2.4.2 The churchyard**

Some aspects of the churchyard are described above in the section on the location and setting of the church. Figure 20 is a plan view of the churchyard showing the paths running across it.

The Hope Garden contains wooden benches and members of the local community and visitors alike appreciate relaxing in and walking through this oasis which is rich in history and wildlife interest. It is above all else a sacred space and continues to offer inspiration and a peaceful place for reflection, contemplation and prayer.



*Figure 20: Plan of the churchyard (the numbered items of interpretation panels providing information on the history of the church and the ecology of the churchyard)*

The church holds occasional open-air services and prayers in the churchyard which is also used for events such as the Summer Fair (Figure 21). Many native trees are present in the churchyard such as cherry and yew, as well as non-native ones such as the walnut. Two large yews are situated on either side of the South entrance to the churchyard.

A pocket wildflower meadow and a heritage orchard with 22 different varieties of Hertfordshire apples and pears, including the St Albans Pippin, have been added in the past decade. The most recent addition to the churchyard is a story-telling circle and story chair created from a fallen tree.

### **2.4.3 Condition of the church fabric**

In general, the fabric of the church is assessed as in very good or excellent condition thanks to a regular programme of maintenance and repair. This statement is supported by the Quinquennial

Inspection Report of 2018, in which the Inspector wrote that “The PCC have maintained a programme



*Figure 21: A service in the churchyard*

of repairs and maintenance over recent years which has placed the building in excellent repair, notwithstanding the areas requiring attention

identified in this report” (Dales, 2018). The following is a precis of this report.

A series of minor repairs were recommended in the 2018 report, many of which have now been actioned or are being planned. For example, these included the need for minor repointing of a buttress cap and on the South aisle, East gable window masonry. Ivy and plant growth needed removing in various places on the external walls.

There is longstanding movement in the wall of the North aisle West parapet. This needed to be repointed on the inner face and coping repointed. This movement is thought to be related to vault at West end and/or proximity of trees. Cracking on the West face is much less discernible although the cracks are greater in number. The Inspector recommended monitoring and advising the architect of any sudden or significant change.

Glazing appears generally in good order. The roof structure to tower roof appears in good order although there are some minor areas of decay. A number of the soft red bricks on the face of the tower have lost their face (Figure 22). The level of decay is exacerbated by hard mortar pointing which is stronger and less permeable than the brick it binds. There is much less decay to the North face of the tower where only a small number of bricks require attention. Some localised decay on the West face adjacent to belfry window.

The chancel roof was completely stripped and re-roofed in 2008 in green Westmorland slates and appears to be in good order. The nave roof of Green Westmorland slate is in good order but there was a



*Figure 22: The soft red brick on the face of the tower which is showing signs of decay*

need to repoint open joints in parapet stones. Other roofs, for example of the aisles, are in good order. There are places where flashings needed repair and there are numerous repaired splits in the lead to the flashings on the cills to the clerestory windows. These have been patched previously and ideally need replacing with a higher code lead and central rolls. However, they continue to function well enough at present. The mastic repairs over more recent splits should be repaired in lead as a minimum. This work needs to be coupled with repairs/improvements to celestory vents.

The interior of the church generally remains in good condition. However, the columns to the nave arcade continue to suffer cracking, delamination and crumbling at their bases. This is most likely due to a combination of concrete floors, soft stone and mechanical damage (Figures 23 and 24). The removal of concrete would greatly benefit these columns. The concrete flooring is both unattractive and harmful to stone fabric in that salts and sulphates migrate with moisture from the concrete to the softer stone.

The Inspector recommended that the PCC should consider a long-term program of replacing concrete with a breathable stone flooring (Figures 25 and 26). An attempt to do this around the base of one of the nave pillars approximately 20 years ago, has resulted in an unsightly repair (Figure 27).

Following the Inspector's recommendation would not only improve the fabric but enhance the interior and contribute towards a unifying of the internal space

The Inspector noted that there are a number of substantial tombs in the churchyard and these are generally in disrepair. There needs to be a comprehensive effort to repair and stabilise memorials before they are lost and the 'churchyards' link with the church lost. Currently, there is a good balance in the churchyard between memorials and green space and it would be unfortunate if, over time, the churchyard became more and more of a park.



*Figure 23: Degeneration of the base of one of the 15<sup>th</sup> century nave arcade pillars*

The car park area generally is very shabby, and uncontrolled vehicular access is causing unreasonable wear and tear upon the churchyard and visual amenity. There is clearly a need for additional



*Figure 24: Crumbling of another 15<sup>th</sup> century nave arcade column.*



*Figure 25: Unattractive, worn concrete floor in the nave installed in the 1893 restoration*





*Figure 26: Unsightly and deteriorating thermoplastic tiles laid on top of the concrete floor at the West end of the nave.*



*Figure 27: The unsightly attempt to replace concrete with stone around one of the nave columns.*

parking for church visitors – periodically – and there is clearly space available if managed properly. The Inspector recommended that the parish should consider a comprehensive improvement to the existing arrangements to ensure controlled impact upon the sensitivity of the area.

## 2.5 Description of interior and furnishings

Those architectural and artistic features which are fixed are described first, followed by descriptions of the furnishings and fittings. Full details of the monuments, including the stained glass, can be found in the Record of St Peter's, St Albans produced by The National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) in 1978.

### The aisled nave

The nave may be entered by either the South or West doors or by entering from the East via the chancel. The inner South door is oak in Gothic style dated

1895 (Figure 28). The nave is impressive when viewed from the West end (Figure 29 and Cover image) or the East end (Figure 30). Between the nave and the aisles there are seven bay arcades with very tall columns of a standard section with four shafts and four hollows. In 1893-5 this nave was lengthened Westwards by one bay. The aisles are of different width. Originally, they would have been of the same width but in 1893-5 the North aisle was widened by 1.2 metres. The nave walls are plastered and painted, as is the stonework of the arcades and other stonework originally meant to be exposed.



*Figure 28: The inner South door*



*Figure 29: View along the nave from near the West end*

The floor of the nave, including the aisles, is predominantly concrete as explained and illustrated above. Juxtaposed as it is with some higher quality internal features, it is a negative feature within the fabric of the church. There are a number of ledger stones embedded in the floor, notably a sequence running between the pews in the centre of the nave. The inscriptions on them are listed in Appendix 5 and include several relating to the Strong family.

The Lady Chapel at the North end of the South aisle is dated from 1621 according to Carey Morgan (1899). The walls of the South aisle and Lady Chapel have six stained glass windows, three on either side of the South door porch. The windows in the Lady Chapel are the three remaining 15<sup>th</sup> century windows in the church (NADFAS, 1978). The six large, Perpendicular windows each have three

cinquefoiled lights with rectilinear tracery containing six lights.

The large expanse of glass in this aisle, as well as in the North aisle, helps balance what would otherwise have been a rather gloomy interior, especially when sunlight penetrates the stained glass in the South aisle casting attractive, subtle colourings onto the concrete floor. These colourful stained glass



*Figure 30: View along the nave to the West door and rose window, also showing the nave centre pews*

windows through which sunlight penetrates were installed between 1868-72 and are by J.B. Capronnier of Brussels (Figure 31). The subjects are the Parables of the Good Samaritan; the Good Shepherd; the Return of the Prodigal Son; the Workers in the Vineyard; and the Sower.



*Figure 31: One of the Capronnier stained glass windows*

The West wall of the nave has a large Gothic revival rose window flanked by hexagonal turrets on the exterior, all installed by Lord Grimthorpe. An encircling outer roll moulding bears the Latin inscription in Roman lettering: “*Templum hoc restituit cathedrae renovator et auxit 1895*” (Restorer of cathedral rebuilt and extended this church 1895). This rose window is very similar to

the one that he built on the West front of St Albans Abbey. The rose window is flanked by two Gothic revival, tall, wide, single pointed arched windows also installed at Lord Grimthorpe’s behest. These originally contained white glass but, as with the East window of the chancel, in 1913-14 the white glass was replaced with stained glass. The designer is Louis White and the window was executed by Powell and Powell in 1918. In 1952 a canopied inner porch supported by pillars was added to the West end door. Its wooden doors were subsequently replaced by glass doors (Figure 30).

The wall of the North aisle of the nave contains seven stained glass windows, one of which is entirely obscured from inside by the organ. The window closest to the West end is a large Gothic revival, decorated window designed by F.W. Skeat. The next five windows are also large Gothic revival, decorated windows, three of which incorporate fragments of drab, coloured glass from the former ruined 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century windows (Figure 32).



*Figure 32: The first four windows from the West in the North wall of the nave*

The final window in this sequence occupies the final bay to the East just beyond the Mander organ. This too is a large, Gothic revival, decorated window entitled ‘Sacrifice’ in Pre-Raphaelite style with drab colour, predominantly brown, ruby, dull green and white. This window is named the ‘Mead window’ and was donated by Mrs Mead of St Albans whose husband and two sons were killed in World War I (Figure 33). Mounted below the window is a light brown marble tablet with the details of the Mead brothers and the tablet is inscribed with the words “*E’en as they trod that day to God so walked they from their birth. In simpleness and gentleness and honour and clean mirth*”. This is a quotation from Rudyard Kipling.

One bay from the East end of the North aisle is where the Mander organ is located. This large organ presents an impressive sight especially when viewed from the South side of the nave. Also in this final bay at the East end of the North aisle is a small area containing a large wall monument to the master stonemason,



*Figure 33: The Mead window*

Edward Strong (p 12) who worked with Sir Christopher Wren on St Paul's Cathedral (Figure 34):



*Figure 34: The monument to Edward Stone and family members*

The West and East arches have four orders of chamfers, the chamfers dying into lozenge-shaped responds. The nave walls incorporate carved and painted corbel heads from the pre-1890s roof. The roof over the nave is of the king-post and strut construction with iron bands and two tiers of purlins, the tie-beams being carried on moulded stone corbels. The aisle roofs have arched braces from the outer face of the arcades carried on clustered demi-shafts and two tiers of purlins. At the crossing there is a flat boarded ceiling divided into panels by moulded ribs.

The celestory windows consist of fourteen, three light windows which Lord Grimthorpe installed to replace the smaller 15<sup>th</sup> century windows.

### **The chancel**

The chancel was lengthened from the previous stub version in the 1893-5 restoration by Lord

Grimthorpe. At the West entrance to the crossing and chancel there is an elaborate Perpendicular-style screen of 1905 by Temple Moore with coving, cresting and cusped arches. The reredos with fielded panelling, gilded cresting and a canopy was dedicated in 1946 (see below). The light oak panelling in the chancel is designed to match. It was made in 1946 by Faithcraft Works Ltd, St Albans. A dado of similar panelling in the aisles was completed in 1962.

The oak panelling on the South side of the chancel and the canopy over the doors is by Temple Moore and fitted around 1906. The date and designer of the oak pews below is unknown. The roof of the chancel is of similar construction to that of the nave. The floor of the chancel is raised a little above that of the nave so that entry to the chancel from the nave is via a low gradient slope. The chancel floor mainly comprises concrete and slabs. There is a light oak altar rail protecting the sanctuary which is floored with black and white paving, and the high altar at the Eastern end is raised.

Lord Grimthorpe built a larger window than the original one at the East end of the chancel where there are now large, five cinquefoiled lights and rectilinear tracery with thirty-one lights: of late Perpendicular, Gothic revival style (Figure 35). This window features canopied Saints and Christ in Majesty. It was designed by W. E Tower and executed by C.F.Kempe in 1913 (NADFAS, 1978). Above was a long lobed, cusped trefoil window which is now blocked and only visible from the exterior. The chancel has six further Gothic revival, stained glass windows, three each on the North and South walls.

A new, double-doored entrance from the chancel to the South vestries was introduced in 2020/21 (Figure 36). A balance in the design of this alteration to the chancel has been achieved by positioning this new entrance directly opposite the double doors that lead from the chancel to the North extension.



*Figure 35: The East window of the chancel*





*Figure 36: Double doors from the chancel to the vestry. The canopy above the doors is by Temple Moore*

### **The South vestries**

The South vestries may be entered either by an external door or by two entrances from the chancel. There is small 'clergy' vestry at the East end of the church, separated by an external entrance and small lobby from another larger 'flower' vestry (which was previously the choir vestry). This vestry now has a mezzanine floor accessible by a wooden staircase. These vestries were completely refurbished during 2020/21 and increased the storage capacity available in the church. New fixtures and fittings include working surfaces, sink and water supplies for the work of the Sanctuary Guild and flower arrangers, as well as shelving for storage purposes.

### **The North extension, choir vestry, parish rooms and Octagon room**

On the Northern wall of the chancel, double doors lead to a tile-floored corridor with three-quarter length glazing on both sides. Immediately after entering through these doors come the tower stairs and a Northern entrance to the corridor and church. The corridor leads on to the parish rooms described above. The Octagon room's octagonal roof light, is shown in Figure 37. The entire north extension was constructed in the early 1980s in modern style. In the past three years the lavatories have been completely refurbished incorporating an accessible toilet directly off the corridor. In 2021 the very small kitchen was enlarged and modernised. At the same time alterations were made to the corner storage spaces in the Octagon room which has a wood block floor.

### **2.5.1 Furnishing and fittings**



*Figure 37: the octagonal roof light in the Octagon room*

This is a summary: more detailed accounts are given in NADFAS (1978) and Tracy (2014) from which the below is summarised.

### **Woodwork**

The 1.98 metre high pulpit is an oak, hexagonal drum reached by a five-step staircase. It has a moulded handrail and parapet with an elaborately carved and pierced design of grapes, vines and ivy. It was made in Louvain, Belgium in 1863 by J A Goyers (Figure 38).



*Figure 38: The pulpit by Goyers*

The chancel screen referred to above is shown in Figure 39.



*Figure 39: Chancel screen by Temple Moore 1903*

At the Eastern end of the Lady Chapel and between it and the nave is a parclose dated around 1946: a square oak screen with three bays, the central bay forming a concealed door (Figure 40).



*Figure 40: Parclose and Lady Chapel*

There are twenty-eight, 11ft long Victorian Gothic-style pews on both sides of the central nave. Mixed amongst them are a further five shorter benches, 6 ft in length (Figures 41 and 42). These are short because they abut the nave arcade pillars which do not allow longer benches. These benches are probably from an unidentified mid-19<sup>th</sup> century reordering of the nave. Some have had to be bolted to the concrete floor to avoid them tipping over. They were retained in the Grimthorpe restoration of 1893-5. In the North aisle there are fourteen full length Gothic benches, although some have been rearranged to form a creche. In the South aisle there are six short plain unmoulded benches (Figure 41). These plain benches were probably installed by Lord Grimthorpe.



*Figure 41: Oak with pine bench pew of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century provenance*

Wooden interlocking chairs, with blue upholstery, which were used in the chancel, choir stalls and Lady Chapel were replaced during May 2021 with



*Figure 42: Later plain pine pews probably installed by Lord Grimthorpe*

Trinity Theo chairs which may be stacked when not in use (the majority upholstered but some un-upholstered).

A number of orange plastic/metal chairs are stored and used in the Octagon and occasionally in the church for very large services (e.g. Christmas and Easter).

### **Stonework**

The font is a polished stone bowl hexagonal on the outside and supported by a hexagonal base. Date uncertain but it was described as modern in 1908.

In the celestory there are six 15<sup>th</sup> century corbels in the form of heads of angels between the nave arches. There are other corbels, for example in the moulding above the door of the South porch. In the North-West corner of the South porch there is a seven-headed niche in a round-headed arch. The South porch was rebuilt by Lord Grimthorpe. The recess for holy water in the North-East corner of the porch no longer exists according to NADFAS (NB NADFAS are probably referring here to the holy water rather than the recess which still exists).

### **Memorials**

During the various phases of rebuilding of the church, a large number of memorials have been lost. Some are listed by Cussans (1870-81), Salmon (1728) and Clutterbuck (1815). NADFAS (1978) lists twelve mural tablets (some 17<sup>th</sup> century, others 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century) and five wall plaques mostly on the chancel walls but also a few in the



Lady Chapel, mostly in good condition. There are a further ten mural tablets in the nave. By the South door there is a light oak board listing St Peter's vicars since 1327 and a war memorial. A slab in the South porch floor commemorates Anne and John Arris: they died of the plague in 1666 and 1682 respectively. The fact that Cussans (1870-81) says that this memorial was formerly in the North transept illustrates the extent to which memorials were repositioned during restorations at St Peter's.

The 'Pemberton Brass' is on the South wall of the nave, just to the West of the South door. It originally marked the grave of Roger Pemberton (p 28) and his family. The separate effigies of Roger Pemberton,



*Figure 43: The Pemberton Brass*

his wife and his family are set in a black marble slab set in the wall (Figure 43). The inscription is a palimpsest on the West wall of the porch.

The largest and most significant memorial in the church is on the East wall of the North aisle. It is made of grey and white marble and is to Edward Strong who died in 1723, and members of his family including his wife (Figure 34). This rectangular monument rests on a black marble base set into the wall. A lengthy inscription is set in a large marble frame with extruded corners each of which contains a flower head. The frame is surmounted by a triangular cornice within which is a bust of Edward Strong with full periwig. According to Clutterbuck (1815) this monument was formerly mounted on the West wall and so must have been relocated during Lord Grimthorpe's restoration.

#### **Textiles and metalwork**

Textiles (i.e. stoles, surplices, copes, chasubles, frontals, altar cloths, banners and hassocks) and metals (i.e. altar crosses, lectern, candlesticks etc.) are listed by NADFAS (1978). Special mention should be made of the hassocks which were created from 1964 onwards.

### **3. Assessment of Significance**

Churches and churchyards of medieval origin, such as that of St Peter's are potentially of enormous interest and research potential, not only for the historian, archaeologist, architectural historian and art historian but for everybody interested in local and national history, rich in material resources for understanding the past. Although St Peter's church has medieval origins, the church of today is essentially a Victorian Gothic-style church having been extensively altered and reconstructed during at the beginning and the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even so, as a representative of churches restored during the Victorian period, its history and characteristics are significant.

A church has stood here as a beacon of continuous Christian mission for more than a thousand years, placing worship at the very centre of St Albans life. Churches are by no means static or frozen in time, indeed the fact that they have been subject to constant change throughout their history makes them all the more important and fascinating. In order to manage this change responsibly, it is necessary to define the relative significance of every aspect of the church and churchyard within its local, regional and national context. This relative significance is articulated thus, following Kerr (2013) and the CBC guidance (2007).

- **Exceptional** – important at national to international levels.
- **Considerable** – important at regional level or sometimes higher.
- **Some** - usually of local value but possibly of regional significance for group or other value (e.g., a vernacular architectural feature).
- **Local** - of local value
- **Negative** or **intrusive** features, i.e., those which actually detract from the value of a site, for example a concrete boiler house adjacent to a medieval church.

#### **3.1 Statutory designations**

The church building with its fixed contents is of exceptional significance as a major church. Its

present form reflects a multi-layered history with medieval origins, fifteenth century nave arches, substantial restorations undertaken during the Georgian and especially late Victorian periods, and modern influences. The church has had a complex architectural, archaeological and historical development which is recognised in Grade II\* listing. Date listed: 8<sup>th</sup> May 1950; List Entry Number: 1103057.

The church and churchyard are within the St Albans Conservation Area 3 'Three Parish Churches'. Area 3 includes the geographically separate churches and churchyards of the three listed, pilgrim churches including St Peter's. The Conservation Area is designated under the Civic Amenities Act 1967. No Article 4 Direction has been made under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 further restricting development.

## 3.2 A detailed breakdown of what is of significance

### 3.2.1 Townscape

The church has very strong townscape value. It is of **exceptional significance** in terms of its listing and its setting in St Peter's Street in the heart of this historic town with its long chronology of continuous occupation and development. The tall tower, in particular, is a major landmark in the town and provides arguably the best overhead views of the historic city. Furthermore, the building creates an important counterpoint to the Town Hall at the other end of the St Peter's Street Conservation Area (4a) and vistas of the whole building are dominant from the town centre.

### 3.2.2 Social, religious, community

The church has stood as a beacon of continuous Christian worship for more than a millennium, placing worship at the very heart of St Albans life along with St Albans Abbey and the other two pilgrim churches. The church is of **considerable significance** as a highly visible focus and centre for mission and worship for the congregation, parish, PCC, incumbent, and Diocese and for the Church of England. The church is of **considerable significance** as a symbol of civic identity and pride in the history and cultural continuity of St Albans.

This significance is emphasised by the church being the starting point of the annual St Albans Pilgrimage procession which is a major event in the life of the town.

The church is an important venue of **local and regional significance** for music within St Albans. St Albans has been a tourist attraction for many years but, with its proximity to London and the development of two large hotels very close to St Peter's church in St Peter's Street, it is destined to become more important as a major tourist attraction with several million visitors per year. The church strongly supports several outreach and charity programmes in the town. As the historic parish church of St Albans, it is a major physical manifestation of the durability of the Christian faith in this place.

Without doubt, the North extension, and the facilities which it contains, have been of great **local significance** in social and community terms

### 3.2.3 The significance of the church for our understanding of medieval liturgy

The architecture and arrangement of any church are dictated primarily by the liturgical rites which take place within and around it. The form of the church building is therefore of **exceptional significance** for our understanding of the evolution of a medieval church in terms of its liturgy. The basic plan form – the cruciform shape with a central tower – is of **exceptional significance** even though the church is now transeptless. Documentary sources exist which shed light on the possible interior layout of St Peter's in the pre-reformation period and the significant number of lost memorials. These include seven altars. There is no precise indication of where these altars were located although Butler (2013, 14) speculates on their positioning based on inferences.

### 3.2.4 The significance of the church for our understanding of Post-Reformation liturgy

The evidence for this exists mainly in the form of illustrations of the interior dating to the 18th and early 19th centuries, and accompanying descriptions, which are of **some significance** for our understanding of the liturgy of this period. The Lady Chapel is c. 400 years old and is of **some significance**.

### 3.2.5 The significance of the liturgical developments of the 19th and 20th centuries

The Victorian scheme is in itself of **considerable significance** as an example of the liturgical fashion of the late 19th century, and of the work of amateur architect, Lord Grimthorpe. The present appearance of the church owes much to the 1893 restoration and successive changes to the fabric of the church identified in the fabric timeline above.

### 3.2.6 Archaeological significance

Although little archaeological investigation has been undertaken of the church and churchyard, they are potentially of **considerable to exceptional archaeological significance**. Many questions about the origins and early structure of the church remain unanswered. Answers to these questions would add considerably to our understanding of the development of the church and of the town. It is almost certain that there are underground archaeological remains in the church and churchyard, possibly including evidence of the Saxon and Norman church and two churchyard chapels, including the Charnel chapel. The churchyard also is of **considerable archaeological significance** as a burial ground used for at least 900 years, regarding its potential for the study of human remains and burial practice over this long period.

### 3.2.7 Architectural significance

To date, evidence of the early medieval fabric of the church is extremely scanty although the 13<sup>th</sup> century cruciform plan of the church can still be ‘read’ and is of **exceptional significance**. Medieval evidence of **exceptional significance** remains in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Perpendicular style nave arcade. The amateur architectural work of Lord Grimthorpe is of **considerable significance**. The pews may, arguably, be of **some architectural significance**. The breeze block Octagon extension built in 1982 is now regarded as having **negative significance** because the modern ‘bungalow style’ building resonates poorly with the church building.

### 3.2.8 Historical significance

The church is of **exceptional historical significance** being one of the three pilgrim churches established by the Abbot of St Albans Abbey in AD 984, or thereabouts. It is particularly significant for both our understanding the historical development of St Albans over a millennium and our understanding of early exile and pilgrimages within the country and internationally. The tower in particular is of high quality and of **exceptional significance**, with its

strongly proclaimed vertical emphasis and pinnacles.

Despite the lost memorials of St Peter’s (Butler, 2013), within the church the extant monuments are collectively of **considerable historical significance** for the understanding and research of local and social history, recording the clergy, university dignitaries, mayors, families and beneficiaries of the church and town. The historical connections of families such as the Lees, Pembertons and Strongs can be traced through associations with St Peter’s.

The churchyard monuments are not exceptional individually – many being of **local significance while others are of a higher level of significance**.

The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian pews in the centre of the nave probably have **some significance** though not because Lord Grimthorpe installed them, but simply because they are approximately 170 years old. The plain pews were introduced by Lord Grimthorpe and so may have **some significance** in this regard. However, Tracy’s (2014) significance assessment does not describe any of the pews as being historically significant at any level.

St Peter’s Chancel screen, created in 1903 by the distinguished British Gothic-Revival, ecclesiastical architect, Temple Moore, is of **exceptional significance**. The Victorian Gothic-style nave pews on both sides of the central aisle and in the South nave aisle provide an “impressive frontispiece to the congregational space” (Tracy, 2014, 3). However, these pews are of a pre-Grimthorpe, standard design and show little or no evidence of traditional craftsmanship. They are, arguably, of **some historic significance** as a block of mid-Victorian Gothic-style pews but their aesthetic value is minimal.

### 3.2.9 Aesthetic significance

Tracy’s (2014, 16) significance assessment concludes that St Peter’s pews “aesthetic value is minimal by comparison with those installed in churches, such as Harmondsworth, Middlesex under the direction of the conservation minded architect George Gilbert Scott.” Tracy (2014, 16) also says that “In their manufacture, little or no traditional craftsmanship was expended”. They appear therefore to be of **local significance** or possibly even **negative significance** because Tracy is so damning about them.

The concrete floor of the church is of **negative aesthetic significance**.

### 3.2.10 Art Historical significance

The plain pews are of **local significance**. This is based on Tracy's (2014, 16) opinion that the plain pews are also of "little art-historical significance".

St Peter's possesses some significant stained-glass windows, including some by distinguished artists who lived and worked in St Albans. The five large stained-glass windows in the South aisle by J-B Capronnier (1814-1891) of Brussels, and produced between 1863-1872, are of **exceptional significance**. Capronnier had much to do with the modern revival of glass-painting. He first made his reputation by his study of the old methods of workmanship and his clever restorations of old examples, and copies made for the Brussels archaeological museum. He carried out windows for various churches in Brussels, Bruges and Amsterdam and his work was commissioned also for Italy. He won the only medal for glass painting at the Paris Exhibition of 1855.

There is some difference of opinion about the East window. Reynolds (1976, 14) states that it, and the small window in the South-West corner of the South aisle, are the early 20<sup>th</sup> century work of Walter Tower (1873– 1955). However, Historic England state that "the 1913 East window is by Kempe and Co., who had a well-known and celebrated studio, and designed by J W Lisle", as is the window at the West end of the North aisle (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1103057>). The East window and the small window in the South-West corner of the South aisle and are considered to be of **considerable significance**.

The WWI war memorial window of three lights in the North-East corner of the North aisle dated 1920 is by Louis Davis (1860–1941) and executed by Powell and Powell. It is known as the Mead Window and is considered to be of **exceptional significance**. In Davis's obituary in the Abingdon Parish Magazine it was said of him that "His colour and design satisfy the sense of beauty, and the actual craftsmanship will always be a wonder to those who understand the art of glass-making" (<https://en.wikipediag.org/wiki/List-of-works-by-Louis-Davis>).

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century window in the South aisle, near the Lady Chapel is by Christopher Webb (1886-1966). Christopher Webb worked from a small studio in Orchard House, St Albans. He became artistic adviser to St Albans Abbey in 1936. His glass work is among the finest of the first half of the 20th century (Roberts, 2020) and is considered to be of **exceptional significance**. The two window panels in the last bay of the North aisle, representing St John the Evangelist, are the work of Francis Skeat (1909-2000), and produced in 1934. They are considered to be of **either local or some significance**. Skeat was a pupil of Webb. His parents lived in Romeland Cottage adjacent to St Albans Abbey and his studio was in the Market Place, St Albans.

Skeat (FRSA) created over 400 stained glass windows in churches and cathedrals, both in England and overseas. In 1934 Skeat presented two glass panels to the Church of St John in Old London Road, St Albans, where he was a parishioner. These panels, featuring the Good Shepherd and St John the Baptist were his first church windows. In 1955 St John's was demolished and the panels were moved to St Peter's church.

The massive West end rose window is noteworthy mainly for being installed at the behest of Lord Grimthorpe and is only mentioned in Historic England's listing of St Peter's church through mention of the fine glass in the rose window being executed by Burlison and Grylls in 1922. It appears to be of **some significance**.

Patchworked glass fragments in the windows of the North aisle are said to be the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century remnants of glass collected over the centuries from when in 1647 the vicar of St Peter's smashed the stained-glass windows of which he disapproved (Reynolds, 1976, 14). Much of the remaining glass was lost or destroyed. This confused glasswork may be considered to be of **some significance**.

The large memorial to Edward Strong is especially noteworthy and is of **exceptional significance**.

### 3.2.11 Musical significance

The three manual Mander organ is of **considerable significance** as a fine instrument and as a

continuation of the long musical and choral tradition at this church, and the role music plays in its liturgy and cultural life. Also of **considerable and possibly exceptional significance** is that the church is still active and is one of the few parish churches left in the United Kingdom where Book of Common Prayer Choral services are sung by a robed choir of adults and children each Sunday. The **considerable significance** of music to the parish and its worship is illustrated by the fact that the church has a paid Director of Music and a paid Assistant Organist.

The Church is a favoured concert venue for community choral events, for small instrumental performances by local groups and during festivals, and it is intended to increase this use. St Peter's has a fine ring of ten bells, with a tenor weighing approximately 24 cwt (1,220kg) in E flat. They give one of the best rings in Hertfordshire and are of **some significance** being part of a long tradition of bellringing here. St Peter's tower is one of four in St Albans where there are bells used for traditional change ringing.

### 3.2.12 Ecological significance

The churchyard is of **local significance** in this respect. The church and churchyard are used by bats and crows, pigeons and occasionally seagulls use the tower in particular as a perch, and the usual varieties of birds visit the trees and bushes. Different types of stone have been used for the gravestones over the years, some more weathered than others, and include Peterhead granite, Cornish granite, Bessbrook granite, Canadian granite, Slate and Sandstone from northern counties. Some are covered in unusual lichen and mosses. The trees are of some age and beauty and of some significance in the streetscape. The churchyard is of local significance as a tranquil oasis to sit and walk and to enjoy the churchyard trail. It is one of the few green spaces where this is possible in central St Albans. It is a place where one can sit and admire the view of the church.

### 3.2.13 Other features of negative significance

The internal layout of the church leads to difficult internal circulation problems (see below) which are of **negative significance**. There is scope to improve the appearance of the churchyard particularly with regard to the churchyard car park which is currently a feature of **negative significance**, especially within the conservation area. Some of the churchyard walls, particularly those on the Western side alongside St Peter's Street require repair and are

currently another feature of **negative significance**. Lastly, also of **negative significance** is the traffic, traffic noise and street clutter and the roundabout

disturbs the ambience at St Peter's and severs the church and churchyard from the Southern part of St Peter's Street to which it was historically much more connected.

## 4 Assessment of vulnerability

### 4.1 Issues and needs affecting the church and progress to date

The future of every parish church is in a general sense at risk from a diminution in the worshipping community. St Peter's is no exception, although when those participating virtually and in home groups are accounted for the picture is more encouraging except that the decline in traditional worshipping impacts negatively on giving at services. Although St Peter's does not rely solely for its finances on giving from the congregations, a parallel decline in giving is reducing potentially available resources and places some limits on mission initiatives. However, the principal issue is that the church is in danger of steadily losing the vitality that hitherto associated with its larger worshipping communities. This is felt most acutely in visibly shrinking numbers at some services, difficulties in finding replacements for retiring church wardens and shortages of volunteers for initiatives and activities to enable the mission action plan to be successfully implemented.

Sustaining heritage assets does not mean fossilising them, but it does mean managing change carefully so as not to damage what is special.

In short the church is vulnerable in terms of:

- Human sustainability – sufficient numbers, capabilities and skills and motivation to implement the mission effectively; and
- Financial sustainability – revenue and capital to support the care and maintenance of the building and to provide sufficient resources for achieving mission; and
- Heritage asset sustainability – the church and its historic assets are vulnerable to

deterioration through inappropriate change, wear, misuse and insufficient care and maintenance.

There also issues of energy and environmental sustainability. In this regard a more environmentally efficient boiler was installed in 2018 as part of our re-ordering process.

Fortunately, the church building is currently in very good condition but our ability to maintain this position in the future must be in question. However, over the past ten years, consultations with members of the congregation and those using the church for community activities, including at 'Have your say' sessions, have made it clear that the church's facilities have simply not been up to the standards and capacity now generally expected in public buildings, including churches, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Indeed, our lavatories, kitchen and vestry facilities were a distinct source of complaint and a lack of sufficiently large flexible spaces caused obvious constraints and difficulties.

Through the early stages of the current re-ordering process we have been able to address several of these urgent concerns including the need for new lavatories, including an accessible lavatory, an enlarged kitchen in the North extension and much improved facilities for our Sanctuary Guild workers and flower presentation workers. However, although the refurbished lavatories and enlarged kitchen have been much welcomed, to meet current standards and future needs, they will require further enlargement at a later date if and when financial resources allow.

St Albans City and District Council have a strategy to further promote visitor tourism. Being in the heart of the town, St Peter's has been experiencing an increase in visitor numbers, notwithstanding the decline during the Covid-19 pandemic. St Peter's is currently not well placed to provide for increasing numbers of visitors although there is much potential to receive and welcome them. In short, a more welcoming environment in terms of comfort, warmth and facilities is essential. We also need to explore ways of making the environment inside the church more inspiring. Some of our recent re-ordering works go some way to addressing these concerns but much more needs to be done.

In 2020-21, the old vestries on the South side of the church which had deteriorated into poor and inadequate condition were completely refurbished and a mezzanine floor installed to provide much needed storage facilities.

In May 2021, aging, heavy and cumbersome wooden chairs in the chancel were replaced by

lighter, stackable, award-winning, Theo Trinity wooden chairs.

A modern and sensitive update of aspects, beyond those recently addressed is urgently needed. Failure to adequately tackle these issues could make the church more vulnerable through reduced attendance, use and revenue.

In the re-ordering project under way, issues and needs have been divided into those which we believe we can address in the short-term (Phase 1 needs and proposals) and may be able to address in the medium-to-long term (Phase 2 needs and proposals).

### 4.1.1 Phase 1

**The nave columns and the floor.** The principal structural issue facing the church is the visible degeneration of the base of the columns in the nave. Lord Grimthorpe's choice of concrete for the flooring of the church was unfortunate in more ways than one. As explained above, the 120 years old concrete is not aesthetically pleasing and the bases of the 15<sup>th</sup> century nave columns are suffering considerable damage. As explained above, removal of concrete would greatly benefit these columns. Clearly it is now imperative that these nave columns are protected from further damage and properly restored. At the same time there is an opportunity to provide a floor more in keeping with the overall quality and listing of the church. Therefore, the parish wishes to replace the entire concrete floor, except that beneath and on the Eastern side of the Mander organ (which is too costly to move) with York stone and relocate the ledger stones in the centre of the nave. The parish wishes to move the two ledger stones bearing names of Edward Strong and members of his family and a third stone to the floor beside the Strong memorial. We propose moving the three remaining ledger stones to a suitable location in the chancel.

**Seating.** The PCC is of the firm view that current layout of the church seriously inhibits liturgical options as well as church community and wider community use. The church currently lacks the appropriate flexible space capacity for many of the community activities for which the church could well provide and which would contribute greatly to mission. The capacity of the Octagon room is very limited (e.g., a maximum of 40 people seated for a meal at a pinch) and activities such as Messy Church and the Friends' Christmas Fair can only be accommodated in wholly unsatisfactory fragmented and difficult to organise manner.

Among the activities which cannot currently be easily accommodated are wedding receptions, large dinners and banquets, art and other exhibitions,

concerts, film nights, conferences, corporate events, graduations, fundraising events and workshops.

A sufficiently large, flexible space; a dedicated and appropriately furnished creche and the addition of one informal meeting space can all be accommodated by replacing the pews with stackable Theo Trinity chairs and creating more space at the West end of the nave. This is what is proposed.

**Creche.** There is a creche during services in the North aisle at the West end of nave. Consultations with parents clearly indicate that they much prefer the creche to be there during services and other members of the congregation appear to be happy with this arrangement and any noise which emanates. However, this creche is currently very make-shift being constrained by pews and without any dedicated creche furniture and storage.

**Meeting space.** There is a need for more informal and formal, private (i.e. confidential) meeting spaces within the church. The South-West corner of the nave offers an opportunity for an informal meeting area.

**More convenient refreshment facilities.** Those involved in providing hospitality (i.e., drinks and small refreshments) in the nave after particular services (e.g. themed Evensong services) or events have found the current layout of the church, particularly the distance between the West end of the nave and the kitchen in the North extension, very inconvenient. Discussion has suggested that a fold-away kitchenette at the West end of the nave would help enormously. The parish therefore wishes to install a small, well-designed fold-away kitchenette at the Western end of the South aisle.

The design being contemplated comprises three panelled concertina doors to open right to left against the South side panelling, revealing sink with work surface for kettle, coffee machine, cupboards and drawers under and wall mounted cupboard and side shelves above to fill the whole unit. In front of that would be a trolley that wheels away from the fitted unit with work surface and shelves under for cup saucers, mugs etc. and a trolley for items to be taken to the dishwasher in the vestry. The trolley would be panelled to match the unit behind.

**Increased accessibility.** The parish is very conscious that the church appears less accessible and welcoming to visitors because of the large heavy, wooden, outer doors at both the West and South

entrances. Being close to a busy town centre, church security is an issue and so the West door is usually kept closed except during services and events in the church. Most visitors therefore approach the church

through the South entrance. However, when the South door is open, visitors are still confronted by the inner doors which are usually left closed to conserve heat. To increase accessibility and to provide a more welcoming approach to visitors the parish wishes to install glazing in the top half of the inner South door.

**Enhancing the North side, Eastern-most nave bay.** Currently, this nave bay, which is immediately East of the Mander organ, is utilised primarily as a convenient storage space. Organ music (within a wooden cupboard), the grand piano, and often choir stalls and chairs, when not set out for a service, are stored here. However, this bay happens to contain two of the relatively few fixtures of exceptional significance in the church – the Strong memorial and the Mead window. There is a conflict here which needs to be resolved so that the musicians are able to conveniently access organ music, furniture can be stored in a more appropriate location and unhindered access can be given to the memorial and window.

A possibility under discussion enables the cupboard storing organ music to remain in situ and furniture to be stored when necessary in what is currently the Lady chapel. The oak screen between the nave columns which separates the Lady chapel from the nave, could be relocated to the bay opposite containing the Strong memorial and Mead window by fitting it between the nave columns there. Access to the bay would be by the door in the screen. At the same time it may be feasible to use this newly enclosed bay as a small prayer area.

**Audio-visual needs.** Advanced audio needs must be addressed. The church's existing audio-visual equipment is basic and badly needs upgrading. However, the existing audio arrangements include a hearing loop to ensure that the church complies with the Equality Act 2010 as well as with Building Regulations (M) and the British Standard (BS 8300-2). Needs have been assessed and detailed, costed proposals for audio visual upgrading have been made by audio-visual specialists.

**Enhancing the South approach and car park.** The entrance most used to the church is by the South door. The pathway leading directly from the South gateway of the churchyard to this door has deteriorated and needs improving. For a conservation area, the car park is very shabby, and uncontrolled vehicular access is causing unreasonable wear and tear upon the churchyard and visual amenity. In addition, there is no disabled parking space.

Currently, the church is vulnerable because it is not as accessible to fire-fighting equipment (e.g., fire engines) as it could be. All heritage assets are

exposed to potential losses from disasters such as fire and flood, but historic buildings and their contents are particularly vulnerable to such damage. The church is especially vulnerable to fire damage because of the extensive use of timber in its structure and internal fixtures and fittings (especially the pews). Damage may be caused accidentally or deliberately. Equally, however, buildings and collections are also extremely vulnerable to damage from inappropriate fire safety regimes, protective works and equipment.

The parish wish to improve the existing South pathway approach and car park arrangements and to improve access to the church by improving arrangements which currently narrow the South gateway access for vehicles (e.g., hearses, cars) to the churchyard and church.

#### **Care and conservation of fixtures and fittings.**

Fixtures and fittings, especially those of identified as having high significance above, will require care and conservation. For example, the Strong memorial needs to be carefully cleaned by a specialist in cleaning such monuments. Stained glass windows are vulnerable to deterioration and damage and will need periodic specialist attention.

**Enhancing the presentation of the church to enhance user and visitor understanding and enjoyment.** The addition of the interpretation panels in the churchyard and the churchyard trail have already helped in this regard. However, more needs to be done to highlight and provide easily accessible information on those aspects of the interior of the church which are regarded as having special significance.

### **4.1.2 Phase 2**

**Creating a North transept.** The architectural quality and stature of the 1970s bungalow-style building which contains the North extension corridor, parish rooms, choir vestry, kitchen, lavatories, choir vestry and Octagon room is considered to be a **negative feature** set against the Grade II\* listed church building. In time, if financially feasible, the parish wishes to replace this building, thereby 'recreating' the former North transept of an architectural quality and presence befitting of the church.

#### **Improvements to circulation within the church.**

The PCC considers that the current building layout is a major constraint of **negative significance** because the current design of the church and North extension creates circulation difficulties. It is impossible to move inconspicuously to and from the

nave (seating and creche) and the North extension (for example to use the lavatories or to set up coffee in the Octagon) during, concerts and similar events without having to walk close to the nave altar or area being used by performers. Currently, the only alternative is to walk outside the church, say from the West door to the external door to the extension near the base of the tower. This is an unattractive proposition during cold or bad weather. The parish is exploring – at the concept stage only - a new North transept with access to the nave via a new corridor on the outside of the North wall of the nave through which a new doorway might be made.

**More meeting space.** The parish needs a number of easily accessible and flexible spaces for parish meetings and private counselling. This will be an asset to potentially rent out for income generation.

**Reception area.** There is a need for a more appropriate reception area served by the parish office. This area needs to be sufficiently large to accommodate children's pushchairs when they are brought for Baby Time and Messy church. Currently, the North extension corridor becomes crowded with pushchairs which overflow into the chancel.

**Choir vestry.** There needs to be a larger choir vestry. The Director of Music and parish believe that the existing choir vestry is too small. The parish wishes to expand the size of the existing vestry within a newly created North transept.

**Architectural lighting.** Currently, the church – particularly the tower - is barely visible at night, and certainly not visible at night from the centre of St Peter's Street. There is no need per se for architectural lighting of the exterior of the church but, given the townscape significance of the church, there may be potential for subtle exterior lighting which we believe may enhance the townscape at night. The parish wishes to discuss the potential for this with the local authority.

## **4.2 Potential areas of conflict**

Major structural alterations will inevitably disrupt the continuity of church services, concerts and other community activities in the church. In order to replace the concrete floor, services will need to be temporarily relocated for approximately 7-9 months. Archaeological investigation may be required although the limited depth of excavation may render this unnecessary. There are risks those vulnerable fixtures and furniture, including the organ, could be harmed during floor replacement. Even so the PCC considers that the time has now come to replace the



floor in order to protect the 15<sup>th</sup> century nave columns from further damage and to provide a more aesthetically acceptable floor more in keeping with this listed building.

All of the proposals outlined above will have some potential impact on the appearance, fabric and use of the building.

Changes in patterns and styles of worship may lead to vulnerability in terms of change to the internal order of the church, particularly its furnishings and fittings. This can lead to a clash with conservation issues as differing values conflict. For example, in order to pursue mission and worship, previous re-orderings – in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries - and the arrangements which they established, may not be considered suitable for present and future congregations and other uses.

One of the re-ordering proposals may conflict with conservation issues. This is the complete replacement of the pews with stackable wooden chairs. The PCC consider this is vital in order for the church to have a sufficient amount of flexible space, which it currently lacks, for purposes which advance the mission. Currently, the nave and chancel are, at best, able to be used for only approximately 20 per cent of time because the pews present an obstacle and are very difficult to move. The PCC considers this completely unacceptable given the mission and the demand for flexible space within the church. On the other hand, it may be argued that the nave pews – particularly those in the centre of the nave – are an impressive, iconic feature of a Victorian Gothic-style church and that they should therefore remain in situ. Our view is that when the costs and benefits of removing the pews and replacing them with stackable wooden chairs are weighed, replacement of the pews is going to be less harmful than the constraints imposed by the continuing presence of the pews.

The existing conflicts over the use of the last nave bay to the East in North aisle are explained above. These have arisen from previous choices and re-orderings and some previous lack of appreciation of the significance of the fixtures in that part of the church.

The possibility of opening the wall of the North aisle to create a new entrance and corridor to a new North transept to solve significant circulation problems may be considered to be detrimental to the conservation of the church building. However, in the long history of the church, the North wall is comparatively 'new' having been built in the 1893-5 restoration when the North aisle was extended northwards. The PCC believes that the benefit of this

proposal to the layout and working of the church would be very significant, so much so that it would outweigh the harm done to the North wall.

## 4.3 Impact assessment of current proposals

The impact of any alterations to the church, its layout and its fixtures and fittings will need to be carefully considered, not least because there is clearly a history of harmful restoration at St Peter's during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in particular.

Apart from temporary disruption which may be managed by finding alternative venues for services close-by (including in the Octagon room), the replacement of the church floor can only have a positive impact in structural and aesthetic terms and will address two areas of **negative significance** (architectural/structural and aesthetic). However, the impact will be positive as long as the protection of the organ is handled sensitively and care is taken in the handling, movement and temporary storage of fixtures, fittings and furniture. Advice from the DAC and its archaeological adviser will be sought at an early stage in any planning. A GPR survey of the nave floor and the North-West corner of the church was undertaken in 2019 and has assisted identification of possible burials and vaults beneath the concrete floor.

Replacing the wooden pews with wooden chairs will have a major beneficial impact in terms of removing the obstacles to more efficient and flexible use of the nave and chancel for a wide range of church and community purposes. There will also be a positive impact in terms of income generation potential. On the other hand, some may mourn the removal of the pews and some may argue that they are an essential element of a Victorian Gothic style church. There will undoubtedly be some loss with the removal of the pews, but given the significances ascribed to the pews above, the PCC's view is that the benefit of replacing them outweighs the harm.

Outline proposals to construct a new North transept to replace the existing extension will have a major impact. Given that these proposals are at an early exploratory stage in which external stakeholders including the CBC and local planning authority are being consulted, it is too early to assess the impact with any degree of confidence. The intention is to have a major positive impact by replacing an extension which is now assessed as having negative significance with a splendid new building of outstanding architectural quality and one which complements the listed building.

The small fold-away kitchen at the West end of the nave will be unobtrusive because it will be accommodated largely within the wall panelling and will be fitted at the same time as the floor is replaced. This new facility will have a positive impact and responds to written pleas from those providing hospitality after services in the church for such a facility. Glazing the upper part of the internal South door will change its appearance but if done sympathetically it will make the church more accessible and welcoming.

Moving the oak screen from the side of the Lady Chapel to the opposite bay will change the appearance of the Lady Chapel but, as part of proposals to highlight the Strong memorial and Mead window, this should have an overall positive impact.

Great care will be needed in choosing and installing an advanced audio-visual system in St Peter's. A good system will need to be good value-for-money, suitable for the needs of the congregation, ministry team, musicians and all others using the church in the future. Such a system will need to be installed with appropriate sensitivity to the church building to minimise any adverse impact. The PCC will engage with the DAC about the proposals made by DM Music and will be fully cognisant of the advice given by Church Buildings Council (2016) Church Care. Guidance Note, Audio-Visual Equipment in Church Buildings.

Other changes proposed including the creation of a more appropriate creche and a small informal meeting space at the West end of the nave should have largely positive impacts with hardly any negative effects.

Improvements to the car park, the South pathway approach to the church and access for fire engines will have benefits in supporting the quality of the conservation area and protecting the church from hazards. So far it has proved difficult to satisfy the concerns of the local planning authority but thought is being given by the PCC, architect and a planning consultant on revised proposals which will satisfy the authority that there are no unacceptable impacts.

## 5 Management policies

This section sets out the policies that have been identified during the process of preparing the CMP as required for retaining and enhancing the significance of this major church and site in the face of its vulnerability. These policies will have been fully evaluated with the PCC before the CMP is finalised.

**Policy 1:** To create a mechanism for a Review Procedure of the CMP which should be regarded as a living document. Our knowledge of places like major churches is constantly increasing, and of course the church and site and its environment are also in a constant state of change. The CMP will provide a framework for managing information, to which new information can be added as it arises. An obvious solution is to bed the Review Procedure into the Quinquennial Review process, to ensure that the document continuously evolves and remains accurate and useful. The maintenance of the CMP as a digital document allows this to be done at minimum cost and effort; printed copies will be produced after each major review.

**Policy 2:** To maintain the church as a central place of worship in St Albans, and to work with the other churches to maintain and enhance its active role within the benefice, deanery and diocese. This may involve development of the building and site. Advice and support will be sought from the Church Buildings Council, the Diocese, the Council for the Care of Churches and other stakeholders and amenity groups, including Historic England and St Albans City and District Council.

**Policy 3:** The PCC and relevant partners will use the adopted CMP to assist them in managing the historic environment of the church, its churchyard and associated structures and features. Management decisions will be taken in accordance with the principles and policies set out in the CMP.

**Policy 4:** The PCC will develop its current strategy for the sustainable care of the building, its fixtures and fittings and site, which are associated with annual funding for repairs. This will include oversight for arrangements for the regular inspection and maintenance of the belfry, bells and bellringing

equipment and liaison with annual reports by the Tower Captain and reference to the Church Buildings Council (2015) guidance on the maintenance and restoration of church bells.

**Policy 5:** The PCC will seek to enhance the presence and ambience of the church, as part of the city centre of St Albans and the ensemble of listed buildings on St Peter's Street. The PCC will work to protect the heritage of St Peter's and will adhere to modern building conservation principles. Maintenance and repair of this major church will be undertaken using appropriate materials and techniques which are not harmful to its historic fabric and character. The PCC will take care to make appropriate decisions and use appropriate materials so as to avoid visually intrusive features in and around the church and will seek to work with the local authorities to reduce intrusive street clutter and the impact of the

roundabout junction of St Peter's Street with Catherine Street and Hatfield Road.

**Policy 6:** The PCC is mindful of its obligation to the church members, the local community and its many visitors to provide access for all.

**Policy 7:** The PCC will actively explore and develop the church for community purposes, and for concerts, exhibitions, events, including where income enhancement can be achieved. The provision of flexible space in the church is central to the achievement of this policy. The church already has contacts with many local community groups and these will be pursued.

**Policy 8:** Safety and security: The PCC will ensure the protection of the building, including interior fixtures and fittings integral to the design and function of the building, from fire, lightning, and other safety and security hazards including vandalism, undertaking specialist safety audits and risk assessments to best current practice as necessary. This should include provision for staff and contractors to receive appropriate and adequate induction and on-going training.

Taking account of the Church Buildings Council (2012) guidance, the PCC will also work on producing a Disaster Recovery Plan, to help ensure that in the event of a disaster they can respond in the most effective ways. Detection and alarm systems need to be kept serviced and up to date and electrical systems and appliances need to be regularly checked (Church Buildings Council, 2013). Training, operation of a practical disaster plan and close co-ordination and co-operation with St Albans City Fire Department are essential prerequisites of successful disaster prevention. Evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency when the church is in use for services, concerts etc. should be developed and appropriate training given.

Legislation makes it essential that persons responsible for non-domestic buildings maintain records of asbestos in the building, for use by those carrying out works and by the emergency services. This should include a plan showing the location of any asbestos, a risk assessment and a plan for the management of assessed risks. Compliance with this legislation is the legal obligation of the churchwardens and PCC.

**Policy 9:** Inclusion regarding the church building and its facilities. The PCC will commission a Disability Audit so that the church and PCC can ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the terms of which came into force in 2004). A disability audit should be made by a qualified person, and its

recommendations considered by the PCC. It puts the statutory obligation on the church to consider all disability issues and take 'reasonable steps' to eliminate discriminatory arrangements. This should be done as soon as possible. Once this is done the PCC will seek to implement its recommendations so long as these are acceptable in conservation terms and do not involve negative impact on or intrusion into significant fabric (including visual intrusion).

**Policy 10:** Periodically review the statutory requirements and constraints governing the management of the church and site, including those relating to the St Albans Three Churches Conservation Area, with the help of the Archdeacon, DAC, Historic England and the local authority to ensure that the church building and site is being managed according to these requirements.

**Policy 11:** There are various aspects of the church and its furnishings and fittings which could benefit from research into the possibilities of proactive conservation techniques. Stained glass windows and the Strong memorial are examples. The DAC and CBC should be approached for advice and possible funding.

**Policy 12:** Enhancing public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the church and churchyard. The church has many users and visitors are likely to increase in numbers. The parish will provide easily accessible information for all who use and visit the church, highlighting those elements which are considered to be of high significance. Printed material for visitors should be reviewed and updated from time-to-time according to the information in the CMP and as part of the Quinquennial review process and/or when new information becomes available. The intention should be to keep the church open during daylight hours for visitors, so far as this is practicable.

**Policy 13:** Archaeology policy. The church and churchyard are of archaeological significance. The policy of the PCC should be to protect and if possible enhance this significance. The guidance set out by The Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists (ADCA) (2004), the Diocese of St Albans' DAC (204) and Elders (2005) will be followed.

The policy of the relevant partners in regard to human remains and their archaeology is to follow

the procedures laid down by the Church of England and the advice provided by Historic England ([Human Remains Advice | Historic England](#))

**Policy 14:** The PCC will encourage diversity of habitat in areas of open space where this is appropriate. It will be aware of lichen on walls and monuments and protected species (especially bats, which present) and legal requirements in this respect.

**Policy 15:** The PCC will work in the long term with the architect, the DAC and potential external partners such as Historic England towards adding to existing documentation (e.g. such as that recorded by NADFAS; the Ground Penetration Radar survey undertaken in 2019) by developing and maintaining a comprehensive database (in hard copy and digital formats, with appropriate storage locations and environments) of accurate records for the interior and exterior of the church and the area surrounding including:

- Site plan, floor/roof and ceiling plan
- Graveyard plan with a record of markers (one already exists)
- Building services layout
- A fabric typology survey (internal and external) identifying original fabric and subsequent phases of repair/restoration graphically, photographically and in text (already partly known and recorded)
- Faculties obtained for fabric, fixtures and fittings.

**Policy 16:** The PCC will take into account in all its policies the need for environmentally and economically sustainable development and management, and will consult the DAC regarding playing its part in “Shrinking the Footprint” of the church in terms of its environmental impact. An Environmental Audit should be undertaken and will be kept up to date

**Policy 17:** Where feasible and when opportunities arise the PCC will encourage further research into the archaeology and history of St Peter’s church and churchyard. In particular, the early history of the church raises many unanswered questions. Archaeological knowledge of the church and churchyard is currently minimal.

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# Appendix 1

## Edward Strong and the Strong dynasty of stonemasons

A very large marble stone memorial to Edward Strong is located on the wall of the nave to the East of the Mander Organ in St Peter's church and the first of six ledger stones in the central aisle of the nave is inscribed with the name Edwardus Strong.

Edward Strong (1652-1723) was the principal stonemason who worked with Sir Christopher Wren on the building of St Paul's Cathedral. Edward is the most celebrated member of the Strong dynasty of stonemasons which comprised five generations of stonemasons (Brill, 1977<sup>7</sup>; Mobus, 2011<sup>8</sup>), although his father – Valentine Strong – was also a very prominent stonemason<sup>9</sup>.

The Strong family had quarries at Taynton and Little Barrington near Burford in the Cotswolds and quarried, transported and used Burford stone – a white or cream-coloured oolitic limestone and the second most important constructional stone after Portland stone during the 17th and 18th centuries. The Strong family began supplying Burford stone in July 1677 and continued to supply it until May 1708. St Paul's accounts showed at the time all of the Burford stone was supplied by the Strong family. The stone was originally supplied by Thomas Strong (c.1634-81). After his death his brother Edward Strong took over the contracts for the works at St Paul's.

For most of the construction period it was Edward who supplied the stone. One theory is that the Strong family transported the stone to London by hauling

it on carts to Radcot Bridge on the Thames near Faringdon or to Eynsham where it would have been taken by barges down the Thames where it could be unloaded at St Paul's Wharf or Barnard Castle. The village of Taynton is on the Coombe Brook and this flows into the River Windrush which itself flows into the Thames but, although the Coombe Brook was not navigable, the Windrush may have been navigable by small craft providing an alternative explanation of how the stone was transported (Campbell, 2013<sup>10</sup>).

Apart from his work on St Paul's Cathedral, Edward was responsible for stonework in dozens of London churches, the Royal Hospital at Greenwich and Blenheim Palace and a range of other houses including some in the St Albans area where he lived later in life. Ivy House, directly opposite St Peter's Church, is considered to have been constructed by Edward Strong. Romeland House near St Albans Abbey is another one of Edward Strong's constructions.

Clutterbuck's history of Hertfordshire<sup>11</sup> also reproduces the precise wording on the very large Strong marble memorial on the wall of the nave. Interestingly, referring to this memorial, he states that:

“Against the West wall, inclosed within iron rails, is a large handsome monument of grey marble interspersed with white: at the top is a bust.”

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<sup>7</sup> Brill, E. (1977) Cotswold Crafts, Batsford

<sup>8</sup> Mobus, M A C (2011) The Burford Masons and the changing world of building practice in England, 1630-1730. PhD thesis The Open University.

<sup>9</sup> Fairford History Society (Undated) Valentine Strong – Cotswold Stonemason, Occasional Paper 3

<sup>10</sup> Campbell, J.W.P. (2013) The supply of stone for the rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral 1675-1710), Construction History, 28 (2), 23-49

<sup>11</sup> Clutterbuck, R (1827) The Historical Antiquities of the County of Hertford, J Bowyer Nicholls, London

When Clutterbuck undertook his research in St Peter's church, presumably in the 1820s, the large Strong wall-mounted, marble memorial lay against the West wall of the church rather than in its current position. It has therefore been moved at some point, presumably. The West wall of St Peter's church was, in fact, one bay to the East of the existing West wall because Lord Grimthorpe had the nave extended in a Westwards direction in the 1893 restoration. It is likely that Grimthorpe had the Strong wall memorial moved to its current location, some 20 metres or so away from its original location.

Furthermore, the inscription in the memorial states that:

"Near this place are deposited the remains of Edward Strong..."

It is therefore likely that Edward Strong's vault is located close to the then West wall of the church and not below the ledger stone which bears his name which is currently located (at the West end of the central aisle) in what would have been to the West and outside of the original West Wall. Therefore this ledger stone has also been moved, probably during the Grimthorpe restorations. Edward Strong's vault is, therefore, most unlikely to be located below this ledger stone in its current position but somewhere to the East of it.

In order to understand who the three named persons on the Edward Strong ledger stone are, apart from his wife Martha Strong, a Strong family tree has been researched using Ancestry.co.uk software. Thomas Strong (1684 – 1736) is one of Edward and Martha's three sons. Those with the surname of New (i.e. Thomas and Elizabeth) could not be identified by using the Ancestry search software except by obtaining Edward Strong's lengthy will. An examination of this will reveals that it does not mention his wishes regarding his preferred location in the church of any memorial or ledger stone relating to him as may have been thought. Through deciphering his will, it is clear that his daughter Elizabeth New (nee Strong) (1676-1747) married a Thomas New (1661-1736) and these are the members of the New family named on the ledger

stone. The will of their son, Robert New, has also been obtained and, interestingly he did express his wishes about his preferences for the location of his ledger stone. He wanted it located in the South Transept of the church which no longer exists.

Regarding the sixth ledger stone in the sequence (Annex 1), John Strong was the youngest of the three sons of Edward and Martha Strong. Mary was his wife and she was the only daughter of Robert Herbert. John New (1704-1772) was the nephew of John Strong.

The story of the Strong dynasty of stonemasons is a very colourful and noteworthy one. Edward Strong Snr rose to a very prominent position in 18<sup>th</sup> century England and he became very wealthy as a result of his work as a stonemason. His image is celebrated in the Wren Window at St Lawrence Jewry which is the official church of the Lord Mayor of London and the City of London Corporation which stands in the Yard of the Guildhall. Sir Christopher Wren rebuilt this church after the Great Fire of 1666 and it was rebuilt again after the Second World War Blitz when the Wren Window was created.

Using Ancestry.co.uk software, an attempt has been made to further identify those named on the remaining three ledger stones. Apart from the Revd. John Boys (1716-1788), Vicar of Redbourn and his wife Ann Seabrook, the others cannot currently be further identified.

## Appendix 2

### **The history and archaeology of St Albans and St Peter's church and site: a more detailed account**

The following is an attempt to add some meat to the bare bones given in the summary and timeline. This account summarises the principal sources of historical and archaeological information available and adds what is known and reasonably surmised about the confusing evidence concerning the founder of St Peter's church and its date of foundation. Given the lack of archaeological evidence about the form of St Peter's church during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the following also discusses other evidence which reveals the possible plan of St Peter's in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, this section describes in greater detail the circumstances that led to collapse of the belfry in 1801 and the subsequent largely harmful 'restoration'.

Not surprisingly, the history of St Albans and St Peter's church are intertwined. This section therefore describes the history and archaeology of the church and the churchyard in the context of the history of St Albans. Providing even a brief summary of a city such as St Albans with a long and colourful history spanning more than two millennia is challenging to say the least and so the main focus is only on those elements considered here to be most relevant to an understanding of the history of the church.

St Albans is rich in archaeological evidence whereas only very limited archaeological evidence exists for the St Peter's. Unfortunately, in two 19<sup>th</sup> century restorations, one in 1803 following a partial collapse and another in 1893-5 when the church was ruthlessly altered and reconstructed, archaeological investigations were not undertaken and so evidence was lost.

#### **Sources**

The principal sources drawn upon for the church are a paper by W. Carey Morgan (1899) published in the Transactions of the St Albans and Herts Architectural and Archaeological Society (SAHAAS), 1897-98; Reynolds' (1976) The Church & Parish of St Peter, St Albans; and an unpublished

paper given in 2013 as a lecture to the Friends of St Peter's by Richard Butler who is lay Reader at St Peter's. Butler draws upon Carey Morgan's work as well as subsequent publications and St Peter's church records kept at the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies collection at Hertford.

Cussans' (1870-81) mammoth History of Hertfordshire has a detailed chapter on St Peter's parish and the church as it was in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A paper based upon another presentation made to the Friends of St Peter's, this time by local historian Kate Morris (2010), and published online by SAHAAS, is also drawn upon.

There are almost numerous sources on the history of St Albans and its archaeology. Among those most drawn upon below are Tom's (1962) The Story of St Albans; Roberts' (1993) The Hill of the Martyr: and Architectural History of St Albans Abbey; Newcombe's (1793) The History of the Ancient and Royal Foundation called The Abbey of St Alban in the County of Hertford; and Niblett and Thompson's (2005) marvellous 'Alban's Buried Towns, An Assessment of St Albans' Archaeology up to AD 1600'. Clutterbuck's (1815) history of Hertfordshire has also been drawn upon. Other papers and publications on specific aspects pertaining to St Peter's and St Albans are referred to below.

#### **St Albans: a town with over two thousand years of continuous development**

St Albans is remarkable in that it is an example a town for which very good evidence exists of over two thousand years of continuous development. In establishing the three pilgrim churches and subsequently a market to the immediate North-East of the Abbey precinct, Abbot Wulsin established the trading town of St Albans. This was a town established by the church. In approximately one thousand years, St Albans had been, successively, an Iron Age tribal capital, one of the most important



cities of Roman Britain, a defended, flourishing Saxon settlement called Kingsbury, and a major medieval religious and monastic town.

The core of these settlements had moved in an Easterly and North-Easterly direction from a plateau above the Ver, onto the slopes of the Ver and then to the other side of the Ver up onto a hill on which the Abbey and St Albans now stands where Alban was martyred. St Peter's church was established by Abbot Wulsin at the Northern gateway to the early medieval town, at the highest point in St Albans to the North of the Abbey and the present-day market, and the furthest away from the Iron Age settlement.

### **Pre-occupation, Iron Age**

Although there have been Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age finds, the valley of the River Ver which flows in a North-West to South-East direction to the South and West of St Albans together with the hillsides around it, contains relatively little archaeological evidence of prehistoric occupation (Nisbett and Thompson, 2005). However, Mortimer and Tessa Wheeler's excavations in the 1930s found earthworks evidence of a Belgic settlement in the late Iron Age on a plateau, part of which is now named Prae Wood just to the South-West of the site of the Roman town of Verulamium (Wheeler and Wheeler, 1936).

It appears that this settlement may have been occupied in the very late pre-Roman Iron Age (10 BC - AD 10) by the Catuvallauni led by Tasciovanus and subsequently Cunobelin. This tribe subsequently occupied a pre-conquest settlement called Verlamio on the slopes of the Ver where the Roman city of Verulamium developed and was occupied between about AD 44-45 and AD 400-450. The evidence of pre-conquest occupation goes beyond the Prae Wood-St Stephens plateau because in the adjoining Verulam estate and in Gorhambury there is evidence of enclosure ditches, small dwellings and a three room 'proto villa' (Nisbett and Thompson, 2005, 30-1).

### **The Roman period and the martyrdom of Alban**

Verulamium is a major archaeological site and Scheduled Ancient Monument. Our knowledge of the town derives largely from a number of large-scale excavations that took place in the period 1930–1965 (Frere 1972, 1983, 1984; Kenyon 1935; Lowther 1937; Wheeler & Wheeler 1936), although other investigations have taken place since (e.g. Lockyear and Shasko, 2015). A large portion of the

Roman city remains unexcavated, being now park and agricultural land, though some has been built upon. The ancient Watling Street passed through the city. The town was destroyed in AD 60–61 by Boudicca, queen of the Iceni, and was rebuilt fifteen years later under Vespasian to whom the new forum was dedicated in 79. Among the ruins of Verulamium are a forum, a theatre associated with a Romano-Celtic temple, a market hall, two triumphal arches, fragments of the town wall, and many well-appointed houses with fine mosaics and wall paintings (Nisbett and Thompson, 2005).

The earliest parts of St Peter's church go back possibly to the 8<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century, but to fully understand the origins of the church it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the 3rd or 4<sup>th</sup> century AD when the original Belgic settlement of the Catuvallauni named Verlamion had been settled by the Romans and the major Roman town of Verulamium (Wheeler and Wheeler, 1936) – the forerunner of St Albans - had been established for over 150 or 250 years<sup>12</sup>.

Here, it is believed that a Roman citizen and soldier named Alban was martyred because he would not renounce his Christian beliefs. He was executed on the top of a nearby hill (Sanctuary, 1986). Bede gives a detailed account of Alban's persecution and how he was led from the city, over the river (Ver) to an arena and then 500 paces up a hill where he was executed (McClure and Collins (2008, 16-19). There a small shrine was erected after his death and St Albans Abbey is believed to have been built over that shrine, now overlooking the Scheduled Monument and ruins of Verulamium in the parkland on the agricultural land below it.

### **The early medieval period and the foundation of St Peter's church**

As a town, Verulamium was succeeded by the sizeable Saxon town of Kingsbury which arose on the North-Eastern side of the River Ver from the Roman city. Kingsbury was defended by earthen ramparts the remnants of some of which may still be seen today in the residential area that now covers the ancient town. The date of its foundation is unknown but it may have been established by Offa. When Abbot Wulsin began to develop St Albans, Kingsbury was a flourishing town. However, according to the *Gesta Abbatum* (Paris, 1259), Kingsbury was levelled in the 11<sup>th</sup> century when the vaulted passageways and subterranean crypts of Verulamium were filled up because they had become the hiding place of robbers and other

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<sup>12</sup> Different sources give different dates for Alban's execution. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle gives the year 283 but Bede places it in 305. Sanctuary (1986) states

he was executed in 209 but Feaver (Undated) gives the date as between 303 and 305.

miscreants. Nisbett and Thompson (2005, 193, 374) state it was because the remains of Verulamium and the town of Kingsbury were outside the jurisdiction of the Abbey that they were levelled by order of the Abbot.

In his *Gesta Abbatum*, the Benedictine Monk Mathew Paris wrote that St Peter's church was founded in 948 AD by the Abbot Ulsinus (Wulsun) who founded St Michael's and St Stephen's churches at the same time (Paris, c.1259). Ulsinus was the sixth Abbot of the great Saxon monastery of St Albans and the three churches are built on main roads leading into St Albans and were 'gateway churches' to the town, its Benedictine monastery and its abbey. St Peter's church was built at the Northern entrance to the medieval town. This was an important period in the development of St Albans because St Albans school, the town's market and the chapel of Saint Mary Magdalen in Verulamium were also founded then. St Peter's Street was laid out by the Abbey as speculative plots of similar size and shape but development was less uniform on the North-Eastern side where St Peter's is located (Morris, 2015).

Paris was writing in 1259 to create a corporate memory of the history of the Abbey for the monks. This was about three centuries after the events and Roberts (1993) explains that some of the dates and events described by Paris are confused. She believes that Wulsin was Abbot around 860-870 which would put the foundation date of the church around 860. As Butler (2013) points out, in their archaeological survey of St Albans, Niblett and Thompson (2005, p194) attribute the masonry of the church to the 11<sup>th</sup> century but a Saxon wooden church would probably have existed prior to this date but no remains have so far been found of this Saxon structure. Butler (2013) offers what he considers to be an entirely unverifiable speculation that King Offa, who was King of Mercia between 757-796, might have founded the church in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century around the time that he endowed the Abbey. Offa had a personal devotion to St Peter and established a number of churches in his name (Yorke, 1990, Butler, 2013).

### The medieval period

During the medieval period, St Albans Abbey became one of the most important monasteries in England, and pilgrims flocked to the abbey to visit St Alban's shrine. It was presumably to facilitate the shrine of Saint Alban to be visited by pilgrims from

far and wide that Wulsin (Ulsinus) founded the three gateway churches of St Albans, including St Peter's. The stone church of St Peter's would have originally been constructed in a rural location. The Hall Place farm estate extended to the North of St Peter's and from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards the farm of the manor of Newland Squillers extended to the South (Page, 1908). Even as late as 1835 there were undeveloped fields behind the buildings on either side of the Northern end of St Peter's Street, including St Peter's church and churchyard<sup>13</sup>.

Unfortunately, the physical character of the church today gives little clue about its early foundation. An investigation was undertaken of the foundations of a single nave column by Saunders (2001) at the request of the church's architect. The investigation was undertaken because of the cracked nave columns. Fragments of an early wall footing, possibly of the Saxon church, were found below the column foundation as well as several Roman bricks. Tottenhoe stone was also found in the foundations of the column suggesting that it was not built until the 12<sup>th</sup> century at the earliest on the basis that this stone was not used in the early Norman work in St Albans Abbey but it was used in Abbot Robert de Gorham's (1151-67) rebuilding of the Abbey's Chapter House.

However, assuming that the three pilgrim gateway churches of St Albans were built at around the same time by Abbot Wulsin, it seems likely that they were built to the same plan. In fact, the Saxon walls of St Michael's and St Stephens delineating a single nave and small chancel are almost identical – as Figure 44 reveals. Although the current plan of St Peter's is much larger, the plan outline of the nave arcade up to the fifth bay, is almost exactly the same. If one then assumes a small chancel, then the plan of the 11<sup>th</sup> century St Peter's is almost identical to the other two churches. This leads to the conclusion that the 15<sup>th</sup> century nave arcade was constructed on the foundation walls of the 11<sup>th</sup> century church.

After the Norman invasion of England, Paul of Caen was appointed as the first Norman abbot of St Albans Abbey. This marked a new chapter in the history of St Albans and its Abbey. The Saxon Abbey and monastery were reformed and the Abbey buildings torn down and replaced by a grand new Abbey constructed of tile, brick and stone from the ruins of Verulamium (Clutterbuck, 1815; Toms, 1962). No records exist of St. Peter's during this period and for nearly 200 years after its foundation

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<sup>13</sup> A 'Map of the Borough of St Albans showing improvements to 1835' held by St Albans Museum clearly shows this.

(Carey-Morgan 1899). However, in the mid-12th century it was one of the fifteen churches which, with St Albans Abbey, became exempt from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Lincoln.

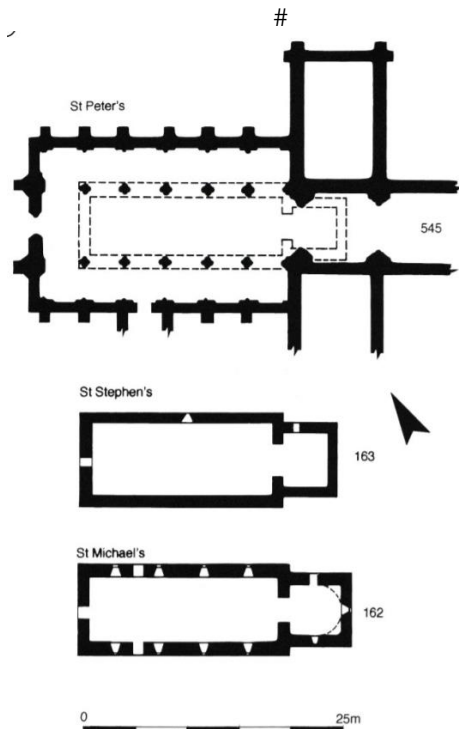


Figure 44: The almost identical 'two-cell' 9 (nave and chancel) plan of the three pilgrim churches of St Albans, showing the current plan of St Peter's superimposed upon it (from Niblett and Thompson, 2005, 189).

The church was comprehensively rebuilt in the late 13th century and it was around then or the early 14th century that the church assumed the form which it retained until the early 19th century. This is a cruciform shaped building with a central tower. Carey Morgan (1899) attributes much of the following information on St Peter's in medieval times from an article by K. Tarte published in 1893 in the Hertfordshire Illustrated Review which used the writings of Matthew Paris as a source. The altar was consecrated in 1215 in honour of St Nicholas by Godfrey, Bishop of St Asaph at the request of Abbot William de Trumpington. Thomas, Bishop of Down, dedicated the (probably enlarged) churchyard where burials had taken place since about 758. Large numbers of people were buried in St Peter's churchyard in 1247 when a pestilence swept through the town. The existence of a central tower in 1254

may be deduced from a record that lightning damaged it in that year (Carey Morgan, 1899).

As explained earlier, during the time of Abbot John de Hertford (1235-126) there was an anchoress in St Peter's church. In 1258 she saw a vision of an old, bearded man crying from the top of the tower (Carey Morgan 1899; Page, 1908). Another anchoress, Alice, was received into the fraternity of St Albans Abbey in 1410 and 1458 Henry VI paid a visit to the anchoress. At the end of the 15th century records show that an anchoress still resided within the precincts of St Peter's. Carey Morgan surmises that these anchoresses had a small house in the churchyard, probably not attached to the church, and that it was likely to be the small chapel of Apollonia constructed in the churchyard.

From the mid-12th century, St Albans was well defended and by 1327 these defences incorporated ditches called the Tonman and Monks ditches around parts of the town, as well as bars at entrances through the defences. As the defences evolved over time, judging by the boundary of St Albans in medieval times, St Peter's church and churchyard were just inside the Tonman ditch which probably crossed just beyond the North-East corner of the churchyard (Niblett and Thompson, 2005). During 12th century, Geoffrey de Gorham, the sixteenth abbot built a substantial Nunnery in Sopwell, a part of St Peter's parish. The sisters were to live according to the Order of Benedict. When the Nunnery was dissolved in the 16th century Sir Richard Lee, who is buried in St Peter's church, was granted the site and built a substantial house upon it, the ruins of which can clearly be seen today.

At St Peter's a good deal of church building was happening between 1335 and 1349. This is evident from a record of parishioners being fined and excommunicated by the Archdeacon, and subsequently pardoned, for cutting down trees in the churchyard for the work. However, little is known about fabric of the Norman church, mainly because during the major alterations at the end of the 19th century by Lord Grimthorpe little was recorded. Archaeological investigations carried out by A. Havercroft in 1981 on the North side of the church, in preparation for the construction of the present-day North extension corridor and Octagon room. These revealed the foundations of a North transept and dated them as late 13th or early 14th century (Niblett and Thompson, 2005 287; SAHAAS Council

minutes 4 December 1981). Very little medieval material was discovered in the investigation and there was little opportunity to shed light on the building history of the church. Baskerfield's drawings of the church (see Figures 9 and 10) before 1803 (Carey Morgan, 1899) appear to show 14<sup>th</sup> century windows in the chancel and south transept (Page, 1908, 419) in line with a 14<sup>th</sup> century date for excavated North transept. This late medieval rebuilding of the Eastern end of the church is confirmed by observations made when the transepts and chancel were demolished in 1802-3 when those undertaking the work observed that many fragments of old gravestones, stone coffins and carved mouldings from the former church had been worked into the solid walls (Carey Morgan 1899; Niblett and Thompson, 2005 287). Then at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, "from the architectural indications it seems clear that the nave was entirely rebuilt from the foundations, excepting the west and south doors" (Carey Morgan, 1899 141).

In 1381, the Great Revolt led by Wat Tyler, led to the St Peter's vicar's books being burned by rioters. As a result, many of the townspeople were executed when Richard II and Judge Tresilian accompanied by 1,000 soldiers visited the town. The Chapel of St Andrew which was attached to the Abbey church, served the town during much of the medieval period, but remained a chapelry of St Peter's parish until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. During the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, St Peter's assigned graveyard space to St Andrew's. By then St Peter's had become the church of the town with North and South transepts and a long eastern arm (Niblett and Thompson, 2005, 287).

The Clock Tower, which still exists as a St Albans landmark, was built opposite the Waxhouse Gate to the Abbey precinct. It was built between 1403 and 1412: a generation after the unsuccessful uprising of 1381. Its location directly opposite the Abbey entrance can be viewed as an act of defiance. It had a curfew bell and clock to regulate the marketplace and daily life of the town.

At the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, two small chapels existed in St Peter's churchyard (Carey Morgan, 1899). These are described in the churchyard section above. Few places have had battles fought in them on two occasions, but St Albans is one of them – in 1455 and 1461, in both of the Wars of the Roses (Burley et al., 2007). In the first Battle of St Albans, hand-to-hand fighting took place in the marketplace in St Peter's Street between the Lancastrians and Yorkists. In the second Battle, house-to-

house fighting took place along Catherine Lane (now Street) which joins St Peter's Street almost opposite the church.

The plan of the medieval town is still very visible today with the town centred on an elongated triangular marketplace beside the Abbey precinct where the three main roads from the pilgrim churches meet. Medieval St Albans grew initially close to the Abbey entrance into French Row, with some tenements huddled against the Abbey precinct wall in the South side. Existing narrow alleyways are fossilised remnants of passages between market stalls. The long narrow burgage plots behind the main street frontages along St Peter's Street are another medieval feature.

Archaeological evidence of the town's development is sparse compared with that of Roman Verulamium. However, archaeological evidence of the medieval defences has been found in various sites (Nisbett and Thompson, 2005, 268-272). By end of 14<sup>th</sup> century development had extended up St Peter's Street beyond Chequer St, Market St and French Row to Bowgate opposite St Peter's church.

### **The post-medieval period**

Evidence exists which throws light on the upkeep of the fabric of St Peter's between 1573 and 1603 by virtue of the existence of the churchwardens' accounts over this period (Palmer, 1985). The work undertaken at St Peter's appears to have been principally essential maintenance to address defects which appeared in the church, steeple or wall. Smith and North (2003, 78) observe that the frequency of purchases of flints, stone and lime suggests that the outer skin of the church walls was in need of serious repair. The inner cladding of the roof required repair by a carpenter and a plumber was called frequently to repair the lead on the roof. The 'North Yle' was found to be in a ruinous state in 1670 and this required a levy to be raised and paid to the churchwardens for repairs to be completed.

Newcombe (1793) gives a detailed account of the dissolution of the monasteries between 1536 and 1541 and the break-up of the St Albans Abbey estates. The abbey surrendered in December 1539 and ancient monastic seal of ivory was relinquished. This was the end of the

monastery of St Albans. All the conventual buildings were destroyed except for Abbey church and the Great Gateway which continued in use as the prison. Substantial remains of the monastic precinct and buildings remain below ground to this day. The Abbey lands were distributed among the nobility one of whom was Richard Lee (Toms, 1962).

Papistic allusions in the church's windows, works of art and graves were wantonly destroyed by St Peter's vicar in 1643 just prior to the Commonwealth period. Then in 1645, the first part the Civil War ended by a battle at Naseby. Five hundred officers and 5,000 prisoners were brought directly to London via St. Albans and some of these prisoners on their miserable march passed one or more days and nights in safe custody within St. Peter's Church (revealed by an entry in the church's accounts for that year, of a payment " for making clean the church when the Cavaliers lay there" (Carey-Morgan, 1899). Subsequently, the Royalists were defeated at Colchester and prisoners were marched Westward to Bristol, to be sold as slaves. These prisoners also marched through St Albans - located in direct line between Colchester and Bristol - and many were confined in the church during their journey (revealed by churchwardens in their vestry records which refer, among other things, to the purchase of cheese for the 'Colchester prisoners') (Carey-Morgan, 1899).

Carey-Morgan (1899, 153) refers to the organ which used to be located at the West end of the church prior to the 1893-5 restoration. The organ was presented to the church in 1723 and was from the Chapel Royal at Windsor. Drawing upon donations, the parish constructed a gallery on eight pillars and with two side staircases at the West end to accommodate the organ. However, in the 1803 restoration the gallery was dismantled and the organ moved to nave location where the Mander organ now stands.

At St Peter's during the mid-1750s and 1801, the dangerous condition of the church tower caused much discussion, anxiety and prevarication until finally in November 1801 the whole floor of the belfry fell down into the church. Carey-Morgan (1899) gives a detailed account of what transpired

between 1756 when the vestry decided that the then belfry should be dismantled and replaced with a new, high belfry. The following is a summary.

By 1785 the four main pillars of the masonry tower were in dangerous condition and the vestry had them underpinned with timbers but, by all accounts, the workmanship was poor. An expert from London – a Mr Norris - was called in to inspect the pillars. He found that the pillars were sound but that the timbers supporting them were decaying. By 1790 the vicar decided that, for the safety of the parishioners, all church services should be suspended and that the vestry should take down the bells and the top of the tower before it became too late. However, by then the vestry were in denial and, against the views of the vicar and Archdeacon, believed that the tower was less dangerous than the expert had reckoned.

In 1791 another group of experts from London, Messrs. Carr and Fisher, were invited to examine the condition of the tower. However, their conclusions tended to support the view of vestry against the vicar and Archdeacon. They reported that there was no immediate danger of the tower collapsing and that it was good for at least a further seven years. In 1799 Mr Carr was invited to re-examine the pillars supporting the tower. He found that these timbers were now in a dangerous state. As a result the vestry decided to take down the top of the tower and the bells, covering the opening at the top of the tower with boards.

Services were eventually restarted but on 21 November 1801 the belfry catastrophe occurred. Drastic repairs were then unavoidable (Reynolds, 1987). An Act of Parliament was passed on 24th March 1803 and another one on 13 June 1806 authorising trustees to borrow £3,000 and £2,000 respectively to repair the church and rebuild the tower and chancel. A new brick tower with a height of 67 feet was erected and an inner staircase may then have replaced the one attached to the exterior of the tower. Then, in an act which appears today to be nothing short of vandalism, the transepts which were over five hundred years old, were completely demolished and the chancel shortened so much that



it barely existed. The church reopened for divine service on 16th February 1806.

The Oldfield Collection c1785-1805 <sup>14</sup> (held by Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies) includes an interesting description of St Peter's church just after the transepts were demolished and the chancel shortened. It refers to "a small ancient room used for the vestry" on the South side of the chancel and the four entrances to the church: at the West end, from or into the chancel, and through the North and South walls directly opposite one another (the North entrance no longer exists).

Clutterbuck (1827, Vol. 1, 116) provides a description of these changes of 1803 and the church at the time of the collapse of the tower:

"The Church at this time consisted of a nave neatly and regularly pewed, separated from the North and South aisles by two rows of elegant clustered pillars, connected by lofty pointed arches, two transepts, and a chancel, on each side of which was a row of stalls carved in oak. The Church being much larger than was necessary for the accommodation of the congregation generally resorting to it, it was recommended by the surveyor, and agreed to by the parish, with the consent of the appropriator, the Right Reverend Dr Yorke, Bishop of Ely, that the transepts should be removed and that about three-fourths of the chancel should be taken down and thrown into the church-yard." During the 1802 demolition, ledger stones in the chancel and transept floors (Chauncy, 1826) "were either broken up and used as building material" (Carey Morgan, 1899).

After the transepts were demolished and the chancel shortened an advertisement was circulated locally for the sale of the timber, iron and old mortar that remained (Figure 45).

The demolished North transept existed as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century as Carey Morgan (1899, 11) notes:

"In the north transept was probably the altar of St John the Baptist, where services were held of the guild of that name which existed in the church during the 14<sup>th</sup> century but was dissolved at the time of the Wat Tyler rebellion."

The structure of the church remained much the same during most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although it fell into disrepair. In 1893, Lord Grimthorpe decided to restore St Peter's church at his own expense. Edmund Beckett (Denison), created Lord Grimthorpe in 1886 (1816-1905) started a major rebuilding campaign in St Albans in the 1890s and is best known for his extreme restoration of St Alban's Abbey in 1880-85. Grimthorpe's restoration rebuilt the chancel and extended the West and North nave walls. He also raised the roof with a steeper pitch and evidence of the previous

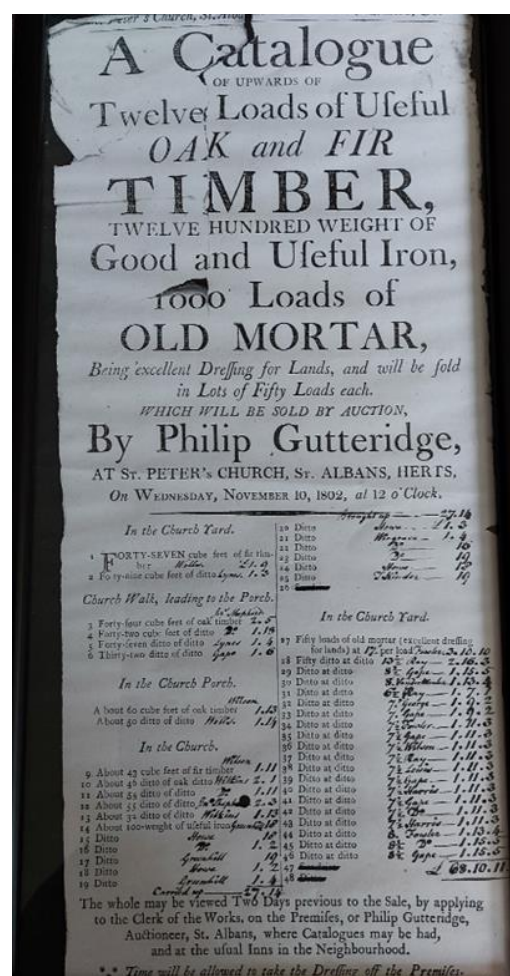


Figure 45: The advertisement for the sale of the remains of those parts of St Peter's church which were demolished in 1802.

flatter pitched nave roof can be seen on the Western face of the chancel arch. The angel corbels which held the beams of that roof have been left in their original position. Regrettably, Grimthorpe did not commission any archaeological investigations during his restoration and so the opportunity to shed

<sup>14</sup> [Oldfield Collection \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](http://OldfieldCollection(hertfordshire.gov.uk))

light on the early history of the church through archaeological evidence was lost. Grimthorpe had a particularly robust and ruthless approach to his church restorations. Some condemn his approach and its lasting impact although, as Reynolds (1987,7) points out without his money and efforts the church might have continued to be a ruin.

Using Hearth Tax returns, during the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the population of the urban Abbey parish and the semi-urban St Michael's and St Peter's (i.e. then the greater part of St Albans) is estimated to have been around 3,200 (Smith and North, 2003). St Albans remained a small market town during the 18<sup>th</sup> century with a population of perhaps 3,500. However, the town prospered, partly because it was on the main road from London to the Midlands, Holyhead and the Northwest. St Albans became a major, daily stagecoach thoroughfare and stopping place and a "town chiefly of inn and victual houses" (Smith and North, 2003, 142). In 1796 London Road was rebuilt to facilitate this traffic.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the population of St Albans was less than 4,000 but it quadrupled by 1900 as silk and cotton mill and other industries grew. However, perhaps the largest development during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in St Albans was the coming of the railway. St Albans was linked to London by train from 1868. That meant the end of the stagecoaches but it led to a rapid rise in the population of the city. From the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, middle-class people lived in the city and commuted to London by train.

The rapid rise in the population of the city created a need for more churches several of which were planted by St Peter's. Over the centuries St Peter's parish has diminished in size. The parish boundaries were reformed once again for civil purposes in 1894 to form the urban parish of St Peter. The population of St Peter's parish increased substantially during 19<sup>th</sup> century: from 1,674 in 1801, to 3,701 in 1851 and to 8,273 in 1891. As the parish and St Albans' suburbs developed during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras it was realised that more churches were needed to serve the growing suburbs and their population. St Peter's raised funds to create plant churches in the rapidly expanding South-Eastern

part of the city. Parts of the parish in the Fleetville and Camp districts were separated to form the new parishes of St Paul's, St Luke's and St Saviour's (Reynolds,1976). The parish of St Paul's, St Albans was formed in 1910 when a large new church was built to replace a mission founded in 1899 and the parish of St Luke's was similarly formed with a new church.

## **The 20<sup>th</sup> century**

St Albans became a city on 28 August 1877 and today has a population of approximately 150,000 (Local Government Association, UD). The town developed rapidly with terraces and factories of the industrial Victorians and development and redevelopment with modern industries and housing has continued up to the present day.

St Albans is particularly special in that many periods of history, and buildings representing them ranging from the timber-framed vernacular of the late-medieval and early modern periods to Georgian mansions, streets of Victorian artisan dwellings and 20<sup>th</sup> century estates, are represented today in a multi-layered built environment which gives a strong sense of history, significance and character to the city. The centre of St Albans is an area richly diverse in both appearance and uses, with a physical environment that reflects hundreds of years of development.

Between the completion of Grimthorpe's restoration in 1893 and 1982 the main structure of St Peter's church remained unchanged but in 1982-3 a North 'transept' was constructed comprising the parish rooms which are connected by a corridor to the chancel. The most recent, significant archaeological investigations have been at St Albans Abbey in connection with the development of a new welcome centre there. In the old parish graveyard church archaeologists have discovered the grave of John of Wheathampstead, a former Abbot of great renown. Inside the grave were three papal seals, known as papal bulls, issued by Pope Martin V (1417-31). Below the graves lie the remains of several chapels from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, and below them chapels from early Norman times. it may need

correcting and it will inevitably require updating. The CMP should be closely related to other key documents including the Inventory and the Quinquennial Inspection reports.

## Appendix 3

### Inscriptions on six ledger stones in the central aisle at St Peter's Church, St Albans

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**EDWARDUS STRONG**

**ObIII 8 February 1723**

**AEEAUS 71**

**Martha Strong**

**ObIII 13 June 1725**

**AEEAUS 72**

**Thomas New**

**ObIII 18 July 1736**

**AEEAUS 98**

**Thomas Strong**

**ObIII 06 December 1736**

**AEEAUS 53**

**Elizabeth New**

**ObIII 06 October 1747**

**AEEAUS 71**

---

**Here Leith the body of**

**Mrs Elizabeth Palmer widow of**

**Mr Joseph Palmer**

**Late of London gentleman**

**Died the 5 day of October 1759**

**Aged 67 years**

**Here Leith the body of**

**Margaret Wilmet**

**Died the 12 day of February**

**1774 aged 73 years**

**Here Leith the body of**

**Mrs Elizabeth Bell**

**Died the 20 day September 1784**

---

Aged 80 year

---

And here the remains of  
Susannah Thomson his beloved wife  
Leith the body of William Thomson  
Late Lieut Col of the Kings regiment  
Of dragoon guards  
Who departed this life at New Barns  
June 29 1768 aged 73  
His rank he owed to his..... conduct  
As an officer..... in dear his memory  
To those who were witness of it  
Thro many long and painful services  
But his iof as a friend can only be felt  
And deplored by those happy low  
Who fhared his intimacy in the shade  
Of an honourable Re niremom  
Here Thomson his and in..... Lamb  
With humble hope await his final doom  
..... sunny hone ship be  
Well may he hope to find admittance there  
Near the place Leith Elizabeth Shaw Niece to  
The above William Thomson who departed  
This life June 1 1761 aged 35?

---

Robert Wering MB  
Son of Richard Wering gent  
And..... his wife  
June.....1717 aetat 29  
Here in  
The frame G..... with his beloved son  
Leith the body of the laid  
Richard ..... Wering who died the  
Eighth day of June in the year of  
Our lord 1719 and of his age the 62

---



Here.....book of  
Jon Boys Clerk Lane vicar  
Of Redbourn.. in.....who  
Departed this life .....April 1788

.....above  
The wife of DW Spabrook Gentleman  
Who departed.....1770  
Aged 50  
And of.....

---

Sacred

To the memory of Mary the  
Wife of Jon Strong Esq of  
The parish younger son of  
Edward and Martha Strong whole  
Intended hear this place  
She was the only daughter of  
Mr Robert Herbert of Edgworth in the  
County of Middlesex By..... his wide  
Died Jan the ..... 17.1 in the  
50 year of her.....  
John Strong Esq died  
16 of January 1757  
Aged 68  
John New of New Barns  
Esq  
Nephew of above in strong  
Died December 29 1772  
Aged 68

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## Appendix 4

### Timeline of significant changes to the fabric of St Peter's (Source: Richard Butler) (2018-21 added by D Parker)

10 <sup>th</sup> Cent.	Reputed foundation of St Peter's. Original floor plan probably marked by line of the present nave arcade up to the most westerly columns.	Saunders, 1995, N&T, 194
13 <sup>th</sup> Cent.	Earlier west wall and doorway constructed in the position of the present most westerly columns.	Carey Morgan, 140
unknown	Original chancel of 40 foot length.	Kinn, 2
Late 12 <sup>th</sup> /early 13 <sup>th</sup> Cent.	Tower constructed, 33 feet square.	Gesta Abbatum. (Rolls Ser.), i, 388-9 Kinn, 2
Late 13 <sup>th</sup> /early 14 <sup>th</sup> Cent.	North and south transepts built out from tower crossing.	N&T, 287
Early 14 <sup>th</sup> Cent.	Charnel chapel founded at south west corner of Churchyard	Page
Early 15 <sup>th</sup> Cent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nave arcade constructed in its present form, on Saxon foundations.</li> <li>North porch entrance to nave, demolished 1893.</li> </ul>	Saunders, 2001 Carey Morgan, 141 E.M. Brabant sketch 1865
1725	Gallery erected at west end to receive the 1660 Ralph Dallam organ from the Chapel Royal, Windsor.	Bell
1728	Private oratories (one in the south aisle and one in the north) existed at this time, subsequently removed.	Salmon, 90
1756	Tower arches removed and loftier ones inserted, ringing room floor raised to improve perspective view of the chancel from the nave.	Kinn, 2
1785	Tower underpinned with timber.	Kinn, 2 Reyn, 5
1799	Bells removed and top of tower taken down in view of parlous state of the tower.	Carey Morgan, 167-8
1801	Belfry floor and temporary tower roof collapsed.	Kinn, 2 Reyn, 5 Carey Morgan, 168
1803	<b>1803/4 Demolition and rebuilding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both transepts and chancel demolished and materials auctioned.</li> <li>Former transept openings into crossing sealed up.</li> <li>Stub chancel built in brick (with the exception of the east face).</li> <li>Many old memorials believed lost at this time.</li> <li>Present tower erected and rendered in rough cast to match rest of church.</li> </ul>	Kinn, 10 HALS Faculties DP93/6/4 1802-1931
1830s	Gas lighting installed?	Saunders, 2001 p4
1863	Pulpit by J. A. Goyers of Louvain installed, initially to the south of the chancel arch and later moved to present position.	Reyn, 9
1893	<b>Grimthorpe Restoration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15<sup>th</sup> Century nave wall north demolished and present wall erected four feet further north to widen the aisle.</li> </ul>	Saunders, 2001 Reyn, 7-9 Carey Morgan, 170

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North porch and entrance demolished.</li> <li>• West wall and doorway demolished and present west wall and turrets built a bay further west with new rose window.</li> <li>• West bay of arcade added to nave.</li> <li>• Gallery demolished and organ moved to north side of choir chancel.</li> <li>• 1803 stub Chancel demolished and present Chancel erected.</li> <li>• Nave roof raised to present height from position indicated by decorated corbels and chevron cill on tower wall.</li> <li>• Clerestory windows added.</li> <li>• Rough cast render removed from all external facings to reveal present brick or flint facings and stone quoins.</li> <li>• Nave floor raised to present level.</li> </ul>	
1905	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chancel Screen erected</li> <li>• Oak panelling in present choir chapel</li> <li>• Font moved</li> </ul>	Reyn, 9 HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1931	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electric lighting installed</li> </ul>	HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New heating system</li> <li>• Organ rebuilt and extended to south side of present choir chapel on girders over old choir vestry as well as North side</li> </ul>	HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Bishop &amp; Son organ installed on South side of chancel</li> </ul>	Morris 2017
1953	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lady Chapel screen erected.</li> <li>• Lady Chapel altar rail installed.</li> <li>• Oak panelling of south wall of Lady Chapel</li> </ul>	Reyn, 9 HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1955	Font moved	HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1972	Re-wiring and new lighting	HALS Faculties DP93/6/18 Jul 1938-Jul 1980
1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bishop &amp; Son organ with movable console installed at east end of north aisle</li> <li>• Pews removed from front of nave to create choir chapel</li> </ul>	Bell
1982	New boiler house erected and boiler linked to existing system	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Churchyard to north cleared ready for building of extension</li> <li>• Northern extension comprising corridor, office, library, WCs, choir vestry, library, storage, kitchen and Octagonal meeting room erected</li> </ul>	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car park on south side of churchyard created</li> <li>• Existing footpath widened</li> </ul>	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Font moved</li> <li>• Drop-in central section added to existing high altar communion rails</li> </ul>	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's

1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wooden doors of lobby at west end removed</li> <li>• Replaced by etched glass doors</li> </ul>	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
1998	New lighting system installed	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
2005	New Mander organ installed in the place of the 1975 organ	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
2005	Octagon Kitchen upgraded	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
2008	Chancel re-roofed	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
2013	Office area created within the existing 'library'	Faculties kept in the safe in the old choir vestry at St Peter's
2018	Church lighting upgraded	
2019	Boiler replaced and lavatories modernised to include an accessible toilet	
2020	The two vestries on the south side of the church completely refurbished and mezzanine floor and staircase added	
2021	Kitchen extended, Octagon room slightly altered	

## Appendix 5

### A timeline list of events at St Peter's (Source: Richard Butler)

Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
948		According to the Abbey Chronicle, the first church was built by the Saxon Abbot Ulsinus (6 <sup>th</sup> Abbot) in 948 AD as one of three gateway churches to the town.  Modern research suggests that the floor plan of the Saxon nave may have followed the line of the present nave arcade, excluding the western bay added by Lord Grimthorpe in the 1890s.	15  16	✓	✓
1100s		Extensive building is thought to have taken place in the 12 <sup>th</sup> century as the 1893-5 restoration revealed much 12 <sup>th</sup> century work used as walling.	17	✓	✓
1119-1146		Geoffrey de Gorham, (16 <sup>th</sup> Abbot, 1119-1146) appropriated the right to receive the great tithes of St. Peter's parish to the Infirmerer "for medicines for the sick". [St Peter's Grange, the farm opposite the church, was also appropriated to the use of the Infirmerer.]	18		✓
1151-1166		During the abbacy of Robert de Gorham, (18 <sup>th</sup> Abbot, 1151-1166) Godfrey, Bishop of St. Asaph, consecrated an altar in honour of St. Nicholas.	19	✓	✓
1200s		The west, south and north doorways which were demolished in the 1890s are believed to have been constructed in the 13 <sup>th</sup> century.	20	✓	✓
1215	26 December	Thomas, Bishop of Down, consecrated the churchyard, at the request of Abbot William de Trumpington (22 <sup>nd</sup> Abbot, 1214-1235)	21	✓	✓
1235-1263		An anchoress is first recorded as living in the church or churchyard during the abbacy of John de Hertford (23 <sup>rd</sup> Abbot, 1235-1263). An anchoress was generally admitted by the bishop (in the case of St. Peter's, by the Abbot) to be	22	✓	✓

<sup>15</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), i, 22; iii, 366; VCH, fn 145; Newcombe, 33

<sup>16</sup> Chris Saunders, reported in Niblett & Thompson, 189

<sup>17</sup> Reynolds 5

<sup>18</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), i, 76; Newcombe, 55, 282; CM, 5

<sup>19</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), i, 159; Newcombe, 66; CM, 6

<sup>20</sup> Tarte 11

<sup>21</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), i, 270; Newcombe, 109; CM, 6

<sup>22</sup> CM 9



Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
		walled up inside a cell within the church or churchyard, to spend the rest of her days in prayer, contemplation and solitary pursuits.			
1247	Autumn	Nine or ten burials a day in the churchyard as a result of a pestilence which swept through the town. On the evidence of human remains found outside the current churchyard boundaries, it has been suggested that the early medieval churchyard may have been larger than the present one, extending north into land more recently forming the grounds of Hall Place and possibly to the south beneath the Cock. <sup>23</sup>	24	✓	✓
1253		An attempt to usurp the Abbot's entitlement to the rectory of St. Peter's by John, Canon of Orleans, was rejected by the papal nuncio after citation of the Abbot.	25		
1254	The Vigil of the BVM	During a thunderstorm, the tower was struck by lightning and oak timberwork at the top was destroyed, an intolerable stench and smoke being left in the tower and church. (An attempt at about the same time to prevent similar lightning strikes to the Abbey by impressing the papal seal at the top of the tower was unsuccessful. <sup>26</sup> )  Even as late as 1887 no lightning conductor had been installed at the church. <sup>27</sup>	28	✓	✓
1258		The anchoress correctly predicted a great famine in the land, having had a vision of an old man with a long white beard climb to the top of the tower to cry "Woe! Woe! Woe! to all the inhabitants of the earth." 15,000 people subsequently died of famine in London alone.	29		✓
1326-1335		During the abbacy of Richard (28 <sup>th</sup> abbot, 1326-35) an inquisition found that the vicar was bound to supply to the abbot one horse for his visitation to Tynemouth.	30		✓
1336-1349		During the abbacy of Michael (29 <sup>th</sup> Abbot, 1336-1349) parishioners were excommunicated for cutting down timber from the churchyard without the permission of the rector (the Infirmarer of the Abbey). A pardon was later granted.	31		✓

<sup>23</sup> Niblett & Thompson, 288

<sup>24</sup> Newcombe, 159; CM, 6

<sup>25</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), i, 330-337

<sup>26</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), i, 313

<sup>27</sup> Tarte 10

<sup>28</sup> Newcombe, 167; CM, 6

<sup>29</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), i, 388-9; CM 9

<sup>30</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), ii, 208

<sup>31</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), ii, 357; iii, 368; CM 6

Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
1342		Master Roger de Stoke, a clock maker, constructed a cross in the churchyard on successive Fridays while fasting. It remained in place for some 200 years. A dispute arose between the vicar (named in the Chronicle as William Puff, who is not on the board of vicars) and the Infirmer concerning the right to retain oblations left by pilgrims visiting the cross. It was found that the Infirmer was in the right.	32		✓
1349-1396		Once again, this time during the abbacy of Thomas de la Mare (30 <sup>th</sup> Abbot, 1339-1396), parishioners were amerced for felling timber in the churchyard without permission. It is thought that this and the earlier infraction during the abbacy of Michael, 29 <sup>th</sup> Abbot, indicate substantial building work at the church.	33		✓
1381		Books of St. Peter's were burned by rioters in the Wat Tyler rebellion.	34		✓
1400s		By this date the churchyard housed two chapels: the Charnel Chapel (dedicated to All Saints, serving as the chapel of the guild of the Fraternity of All Saints, also known as the Charnel Brotherhood) in the south west corner and Cornwall's Chapel (dedicated to the Holy Cross) thought to have been to the west of the church. It is thought that the Charnel Chapel was demolished in the 16 <sup>th</sup> century, but as late as 1751 the vestry determined that the south wall of the churchyard should be reduced in height to match that of the rest, this presumably being the remaining wall of the Charnel Chapel. <sup>35</sup>	36	✓	✓
1400s		The present nave arcade and south aisle wall (excluding the westernmost bay) are thought to date from this period, as did the north aisle wall demolished in the 1890s.	37	✓	✓
1420-1440		The Infirmer was to apply a substantial part of the tithes from St. Peter's to the purchase of wine for hospitality at the convent.	38		
1426 or 1427		Abbot John of Wheathampstead (33rd and 35th Abbot, 1420-1440 and 1452-1465), hearing rumours that certain persons were secretly hostile to the Roman Catholic forms	39		✓

<sup>32</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), ii, 335; Newcombe, 239; CM 6

<sup>33</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), iii, 368; CM 6

<sup>34</sup> Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.), iii, 292; CM 7

<sup>35</sup> Niblett & Thompson, 288

<sup>36</sup> Amundisham (Rolls Ser.) I, 446; ii, 327; CM 7

<sup>37</sup> Tarte 11; Reynolds 5

<sup>38</sup> Amundesham (Roll. Ser.) ii, 312; 320

<sup>39</sup> Amundesham (Roll. Ser.) i, 222-9; VCH n. 158

Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
		of religion, held a synod at St. Peter's and ordered the suspects to appear before him. Some of them confessed their error, and the abbot ordered them to do penance and their books to be burnt.			
1455		Burials include soldiers killed in the 1455 and 1461 Battles of St Albans.			✓
1467		A meeting took place between the vicar of St. Peter's and the warden of St. Andrew's (the church then in the abbey grounds just north of the Abbey church), perhaps concerning burials of St. Andrew's parishioners (the churchyard of St. Andrew's having closed earlier in the century).	40		
1479-1480		King Edward IV and his Queen Elizabeth petitioned Abbot Wallingford (37 <sup>th</sup> Abbot, 1476-1492) to admit Elizabeth Katherine Holsted as Anchoress. She was subsequently admitted.	41		✓
1515		The double sided brass in the south porch (a "palimpsest") commemorates the death of John Ball, a brickmaker, on one side and Roger Pemberton (1627) who built the Pemberton alms-houses on the other.		✓	✓
1539		Following the dissolution of the monastery, both the right of presentation to the living and also the right to receive the great tithes of the parish were granted by Henry VIII to Sir Nicholas Bacon and Thomas Skipwith, subject to payment of a yearly pension to the king.	42		✓
1552		According to the inventory of the church goods taken for Edward VI's commissioners, the tower contained 4 bells and a sanctus.	43	✓	✓
1573		The ringers were paid to mark the procession through the town of Queen Elizabeth, on a visit to the patron, Sir Nicholas Bacon, at Gorhambury.	44		✓
1589		The bells were rung to mark the defeat of the Spanish Armada.	45		✓

<sup>40</sup> Reg. Abbat. J de W (Roll. Ser.) ii, 74; Niblett & Thompson, 288

<sup>41</sup> Reg. Abbat. J de W (Roll. Ser.) ii, 202; CM 9

<sup>42</sup> Pat. 36 Hen. VIII, pt. 27, m. 12 (39); VCH n. 151

<sup>43</sup> Dodds, 190

<sup>44</sup> CM 15

<sup>45</sup> CM 17

Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
1592-1593		The vicar, the Revd William Moore, was removed following an application to the Consistory Court	46		
1600		The right of presentation to the living passed to the Bishop of Ely.	47		
1600		The bells were re-hung.	48		
1618		The ten commandments and the King's Arms were "set up at the east end of the church in a frame of timber covered in canvass". They were subsequently removed during the commonwealth and reinstated after the restoration.	49		✓
1627	20 November	Roger Pemberton, formerly High Sherriff of Hertfordshire and founder of the Pemberton Alms-houses opposite the church, was buried on this date, <sup>50</sup> having died on 20 November. The brass inside the south door and one side of the double sided brass in the south porch are memorials.			✓
1628		Five bells were cast in the churchyard from the original four, the tenor weighing almost 21¾ cwt. It is thought that the five were augmented to a ring of six in about 1631.	51	✓	✓
1633	18 October	King James' <i>Declaration of Sports</i> for reading by the clergy to indicate appropriate Sunday amusements had been issued in 1617 but was later withdrawn. The new declaration issued on this date on the inspiration of Archbishop Laud. King Charles ordered that any minister who refused to read it would be deprived of his position.			✓
1634		The church accounts show that a "Book of Liberty" was purchased, presumably the <i>Declaration of Sports</i> .	52		✓
1641		The patron, Matthew Wren, Bishop of Ely, was imprisoned in the Tower as a supporter of Archbishop Laud and the Long Parliament passed an Act requiring "scandalous pictures" to be removed from churches. 5 shillings was paid to a man "to take off Popish sentiments from the graves and windows."	53		✓

<sup>46</sup> CM 21

<sup>47</sup> Pat. 42 Eliz. pt. 9, m. 5; VCH n. 153

<sup>48</sup> Dodds, 190

<sup>49</sup> CM 16

<sup>50</sup> St. Peter's Burial Register

<sup>51</sup> Dodds, 190

<sup>52</sup> CM 19

<sup>53</sup> NADFAS 52

Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
1642	1 May	57 Parishioners and the three churchwardens signed petitions to both Houses of Parliament to have the vicar, the Revd Anthony Smith, removed from office for pluralism and for an appointment to be made otherwise by Wren. The Long Parliament granted the petition and directed Wren (still in the Tower at this time) to make no appointment without Parliament's approval. Mr Rathborne was "desired to officiate as vicar" in place of the Revd Smith.	54		✓
1643	25 September	The Solemn League and Covenant was signed by both Houses of Parliament and the Scottish commissioners. Every man over 18 was required to sign the covenant. The churchwardens subsequently paid 2s 6d for the covenant to be engrossed on parchment.	55		✓
1645	June	Following the defeat of the Royalists at Naseby over 5,000 prisoners were marched to London. Some were imprisoned in the church.	56	✓	✓
1661	12 April	The Revd John Retchford was appointed vicar. Of strong puritan views, it is said that he destroyed some of the stained glass. His daughter was buried in the church in 1665 and his son in 1668, having been baptised 3 years earlier. <sup>57</sup>	58	✓	✓
1648	August	Following the siege of Colchester and the victory of Fairfax's army, hundreds of royalist prisoners were marched to Bristol to be deported to the colonies. Again, prisoners were incarcerated in the church and the churchwardens paid a man to remove windows and things from the church while they were there, to nail the door shut and to clean up afterwards.	59	✓	✓
1659	January	The ringers rang the bells to mark the entry into the town of General Monk just before the restoration of Charles II.	60		✓
1666		The slate slab in the floor of the south porch marks the grave of two children who died of the plague of 1666.			✓
1723		The organ of the Chapel Royal, Windsor, originally built by Ralph Dallam in 1660 was acquired for the church by Christopher Packe MD (1686–1749, author of <i>A New</i>	61	✓	✓

<sup>54</sup> CM 20

<sup>55</sup> Toms 104

<sup>56</sup> CM 22

<sup>57</sup> St. Peter's Burial and Baptism Registers

<sup>58</sup> NADFAS 53 which gives the date as 1647, but taking the date from Clutterbuck i, 116 who ascribes the date of 1647 to the induction of the Revd *William* Retchford.

<sup>59</sup> CM 22-23; NADFAS 53

<sup>60</sup> CM 18; Toms, 104

<sup>61</sup> CM 23

Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
		<i>Philosophico-chorographical Chart of East Kent</i> , the first geological map of Southern England) and installed in a new gallery above the West door. This organ (relocated in 1893 and refurbished) served the church until 1973 and its casing until 2005.			
1723		The memorial to Edward Strong, master mason to Sir Christopher Wren for St Paul's Cathedral, was erected.			✓
1729	4 June	The vestry determined that the (now unringable) ring of six bells should be recast and a proposal was made that they should be augmented to eight. This came to pass because:	<sup>62</sup>	✓	✓
1729	27 December	The first peal (of Plain Bob Major, a method rung on eight bells) was rung at the church by the Ancient Society of College Youths.		✓	✓
1756		The vestry determined that the existing belfry should be taken down and erected 22 feet higher up the tower, in order to provide a better view along the church. This work was subsequently carried out.	<sup>63</sup>		✓
1757-1760		Burials include Foundling Hospital babies.			✓
1785	May	Disastrously, the four piers supporting the tower were insufficiently strong at the higher level to support the beams installed in the 1750s (the piers were solid masonry lower down but had rubble infill higher up). The vestry directed the necessary repairs. The contractors carried out the work defectively, undermining the piers and shoring them up with timber faced with brickwork.	<sup>64</sup>		✓
1787		Two new trebles were added, to augment the ring of bells to ten.	<sup>65</sup>	✓	✓
1790		Divine service in the church was suspended due to the parlous state of the tower. It appears that services were later resumed.	<sup>66</sup>		✓
1799		The top part of the tower was dismantled to make it sufficiently safe for divine service to be resumed, though the vicar still refused to allow services to take place.	<sup>67</sup>		✓

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<sup>62</sup> CM 24-5

<sup>63</sup> Tarte 3; CM 30

<sup>64</sup> Tarte 3; CM 31-32

<sup>65</sup> Dodds, 190; CM 26

<sup>66</sup> CM 35

<sup>67</sup> CM 38



Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
1801	21 November	On Saturday morning, the fears of the vicar were realised and the remains of the tower collapsed into the church.	<sup>68</sup>	✓	✓
1803	March	First Act of Parliament authorised the levying of a rate for the repair of the tower. £4,000 was raised and the remains of the tower were taken down.	<sup>69</sup>		
1803-1806		The old transepts were removed, the chancel was rebuilt (but of reduced length) and the tower was rebuilt in more or less its present form.	<sup>70</sup>		✓
1806		Second Act of Parliament passed to raise a further £2,000 for the repair of the tower.	<sup>71</sup>		
1852		An order made by Queen Victoria in council authorised the sale by the bishop of Ely of the right of presentation to the living, to the bishop of Oxford.	<sup>72</sup>		
1854		The patronage was transferred to the crown, where it remains. The Church's royal patronage is reflected in the red cassocks worn by members of the choir.	<sup>73</sup>		✓
1863-1872		The Capronnier windows in the south aisle were installed.		✓	✓
1863		The pulpit by J A Goyers of Louvain was installed.			✓
1868		The ring of ten bells was augmented to twelve thanks to the generosity of Mr John Lewis, a non-conformist, who rang on the bells on 19 May 1868 and who sadly died eight days later.	<sup>74</sup>		✓
1883		The two new trebles, along with two older bells, were melted down and recast into two, with the result that the church again had a ring of ten (which it has to this day).	<sup>75</sup>		✓
1887	22 March	F. W. Kinneir Tarte, Architect, reported to the vestry on the state of the church, describing a church which presented a shabby appearance with peeling rough cast on the tower and nave, decaying local stone at the east end and unsafe turrets at the west end.	<sup>76</sup>		✓

<sup>68</sup> Tarte 4; CM 38

<sup>69</sup> Tarte 4

<sup>70</sup> Tarte 4; CM 39

<sup>71</sup> Tarte 4

<sup>72</sup> Clergy List, 1852–3; VCH n. 155

<sup>73</sup> London Gazette 1854, p. 2867; VCH n. 156

<sup>74</sup> Stone slab in ringing chamber and CM 26

<sup>75</sup> Dodds 190, CM 26

<sup>76</sup> Tarte 10-11

Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
1892		The vicar and churchwardens approached Lord Grimthorpe to advise on repairs.	<sup>77</sup>		✓
1893-1895		Having completed his restoration of the Abbey with the completion of the flooring in 1893, Lord Grimthorpe accepted the invitation to see to the restoration of St Peter's. He extended the church westwards by one bay and rebuilt the west front, demolishing the 13 <sup>th</sup> century doorway and adding the rose window (with some medieval fragments of painted glass, but otherwise plain glass at this stage). The gallery at the west end was removed and the organ relocated to the east end of the nave. The nave roof was raised from the position indicated by the painted corbels and its pitch altered as indicated by the line on the western arch of the chancel. The north aisle was widened by four feet by relocating the north wall and new windows were made to receive the medallions of broken glass. The old vestry was demolished and the current south vestries built, the south porch was rebuilt and strengthening carried out to the tower. Pinnacles and other stone ornamentation was added and the old rough cast was hacked off the tower and nave so that the church assumed its current external appearance of brick, flint facing and ashlar quoins.	<sup>78</sup>	✓	✓
1913		East Window above the High Altar and the two windows on the south wall of the chancel were installed.			✓
1915		Window on the west wall of the south aisle and the two windows on the north wall of the chancel installed.			✓
1918		The Mead window in the Pre-Raphaelite style was installed.			✓
1922		The coloured glass was installed in the rose window.			✓
1952		Triangular window above the Lady Chapel altar installed.			✓
1954		The westernmost window in the north aisle was installed. Originally made in 1934 for St. John's, Old London Road, it was transferred to St Peter's in 1954 when St John's was demolished.			✓
1974		A new organ was installed, mainly using the 1725 casing, with the main section in the nave and a small section in the south wall of the chancel. This served the church until 2005 when the current organ was installed.	<sup>79</sup>		

<sup>77</sup> Reynolds 5

<sup>78</sup> Ferriday 192-3

<sup>79</sup> Reynolds 15

Year	Day	Event	Source	Timeline	History
1982		The north transept extension was built to provide the octagon, the library, the choir vestry, the kitchen, the church office and the toilets.		✓	✓
1993		The old bells were removed and recast by the Whitechapel Bell foundry to form the present ring of ten bells, the tenor weighing slightly more than 24 cwt in E flat.	<sup>80</sup>	✓	✓
1998		The glass doors at the western entrance were installed.			✓
2006		The new organ (a three-manual mechanical (tracker) action instrument with 39 stops) was installed by the world-renowned London firm, Mander Organs.		✓	✓

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<sup>80</sup> Dodds 260-3; CM 26

## Abbreviations

Amundesham (Rolls Ser.)	<i>Annales Monasterii S. Albani, a Johanne Amundesham, monacho, ut videtur, conscripti</i> (A. D. 1421-1440). <i>Quibus praefigitur Chronicon rerum gestarum in Mon. S. Albani</i> (A. D. 1422-1431), a quodam auctore ignoto compilatum, Joannis de Amundesham Probably written before 1452. Amundesham was a monk of St. Albans. These annals from 1420-1440 are concerned with the affairs of the abbey during the first abbacy of John of Wheathamstead. Published as Part V of the Rolls Series.
CM	<i>St. Peter's Church, St. Albans</i> , W. Carey Morgan. A history of the Church written by a former curate and published by Gibbs & Bamforth in 1899. The 43 page booklet is a revised version of a paper delivered by Morgan to the St. Albans and Herts Architectural and Archaeological Society.
<i>Chronica Monasterii S. Albani</i>	See <i>Rolls Series</i>
Dodds	<i>The Church Bells of Hertfordshire</i> , Geoffrey Dodds, 1994, Redcar
Gesta Abbat. (Rolls Ser.)	<i>Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani</i> . Principally taken from the Cottonian Manuscript Claudius E iv. This manuscript is thought to have been written in the 1390's in the Scriptorium of St. Albans Abbey under the supervision of Thomas Walsingham (who ceased to be the Praeceptor in 1395). It is in 3 parts, the first covering the period to 1255 is derived mainly from Matthew Paris's <i>Vitae Abbatum</i> , the second to 1308 partly so based and the third for the period until the 1390s being Walsingham's own work. There is a continuation to 1401. Published as Part IV of the Rolls Series.
NADFAS	Record of St. Peter's prepared by the Local Committee of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies, 1978
Ferriday	<i>Lord Grimthorpe 1816-1905</i> , Peter Ferriday, 1957, London. The standard biography of Lord Grimthorpe.
Newcombe	<i>The History of the Abbey of St. Alban</i> , The Revd Peter Newcombe, Rector of Shenley, 1793
Niblett & Thompson	<i>Alban's Buried Towns: An Assessment of St Albans' Archaeology up to AD 1600</i> , Rosalind Niblett & Isobel Thompson, xv+413 pages, 153 illustrations, 6 fold-out plans inside back cover, 12 tables. 2005. Oxford: Oxbow; 1-84217-149-6 hardback
Reg. Abbat. J de W (Rolls Series)	<i>Registrum abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede</i> . A register compiled soon after the death of John of Wheathamstead (33 <sup>rd</sup> and 35 <sup>th</sup> Abbot, 1420-1440 and 1452-1465), telling the events of his second abbacy. It was edited for the Rolls Series by H. T. Riley and forms vol. i. of the <i>Registra quorundam abbatum monasterii S. Albani</i> , published as Part VI of the Rolls Series.
Reynolds	<i>The Church and Parish of St. Peter, St. Albans</i> , Eric V. Reynolds, 1976, St Albans

Roll. Ser.	<p>The <i>Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland During the Middle Ages (The Rolls Series)</i>, published under the authority of the Master of the Rolls between 1858 and 1896. Contains printed versions of scarce manuscripts under the editorship of distinguished scholars. The 28<sup>th</sup> Volume was published between 1863 and 1876 under the editorship of Henry Thomas Riley and contains 7 works in 12 books associated with St. Albans Abbey and known together as <i>Chronica Monasterii S. Albani</i>. The 7 works are:</p> <p>I        Walsingham, Thomas. <i>Historia Anglicana</i>. 2 vols. London, 1863- 1864.</p> <p>II        Rishanger, William. <i>Chronica et Annales</i> 1259-1307. London, 1865. 1 vol. Rishanger became a monk of St. Albans in 1271.</p> <p>III       Trokelowe, John de. Johannes de Troklowe et Henrici de Blaneфорde <i>Chronica et Annales</i> 1259-1296, 1307-1324, 1392-1406. London, 1865. 1 vol. Written after 1229. The author was a monk of St. Albans.</p> <p>IV       Walsingham, Thomas. <i>Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani, a Thomas Walsingham, regnate Ricardo Secundo, ejusdem ecclesiae Prae centore, compilata</i>. 3 vols. London, 1867-1869.</p> <p>V        Amundesham, Johannes. <i>Annales Monasterii S. Albani, a Johanne Amundesham, monacho, ut videtur, conscripti (A. D. 1421-1440). Quibus praefigitur Chronicon rerum gestarum in Mon. S. Albani (A. D. 1422-1431), a quodam auctore ignoto compilatum</i>, 2 vols. London, 1870-1871.</p> <p>VI       St. Albans Abbey. <i>Registra quorundam Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani, qui saeculo XV floruerunt (John Wethamstede, Will. Albon, etc.)</i>. 2 vols. London, 1872-1873. Deals both with the affairs of the abbey and the Political history of England, especially 1455-61. Wheathamstead was 33<sup>rd</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Abbot, 1420-40, 1451-65.</p> <p>VII      Walsingham, Thomas. <i>Ypodigma Neustriae</i> 1 vol. London, 1876. A manual of Norman and English history.</p>
Tarte	<i>Report Read at Vestry Meeting, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1887</i> , F. W. Kinneir Tarte, Architect
Toms	<i>The Story of St. Albans</i> , Elsie Toms, Luton, 1962. The standard popular history of St. Albans.
VCH	<i>A History of the County of Hertford</i> , Ed. William Page, 1908, Vol 2. From the Victoria County Histories series. Pages 412-424 concern the Parish of St. Peter's, St. Albans.
Walsingham	<i>Historia Anglicana</i> , Walsingham, Thomas. The earlier portion is a compilation from other chroniclers. The account of the years 1377-1422 is contemporary and is Walsingham's own work. Published in 2 volumes as Part I of the Rolls Series of the <i>Chronica Monasterii S. Albani</i>

