

**Welcome to the Parish Church
of St. Peter's, Heswall**

Welcome to St. Peter's Church

We hope that you will enjoy looking round the church - please take a copy of these notes which will help you make the most of it.

As far as is known, this is the third church on the present site. It was built in 1879, four years after a violent thunderstorm had struck the previous building and lightning had killed two men during Evensong. This second church was erected in 1739, two years after John Norris had been instituted as Rector and the sketch and model can be seen by the North-West window. It was a small building without side aisles. It replaced a mediaeval church which had become dilapidated and apart from the tower, beyond restoration. No one knows exactly when the original church was built but as the list of Rectors goes back to 1300, it was probably in existence then.

All three churches are represented in the present building. The mediaeval tower has served each structure in turn. Memorial tablets, boards and font come from the eighteenth century church. The skill and artistry of our own day are well represented by the kneelers in the pews.

Today this church is a vibrant place of prayer and worship and a home for part of the Christian community in Heswall. Every Sunday, the building is buzzing with activity as people of all generations gather to worship God, to pray, learn, grow and go out from here to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Peter's offers worship in a variety of forms both traditional and contemporary. Organ and choir lead some of our services, others are more informal with a range of worship and teaching for children and families. A large number of groups and organisations provide mass opportunities to join in church life.

While you are here, do pause to say a quiet prayer for us and for yourself, as well as for the world of which we are part. We serve the living God who has shown himself to us in Jesus and who wants to touch and change all of our lives. We pray that you will meet with him here.

If you would like to know more, we would love to see you on a Sunday. Please feel free to pick up a news-sheet or visit our website: www.heswallparish.co.uk

May the Lord bless you richly.

Martin Cannam, Rector

The Baptistry

As you entered by the Southwest porch, you will have seen the fine oak door, built in 1980 as a memorial to William Gibbons, a former churchwarden, immediately to your left is the old baptistry. This, with the tower above, is the oldest part of the church and dates back to the 15th century. Most of the monuments from that church can also be found here, including those of the Haselwalls, early patrons of the church in their capacity as Lords of the Manor and those of the Gleggs of Gayton.

The Nave

On the wall to the left of the main door you will see a list, carved in sandstone, of the Rectors since 1300.

Move forward to the centre aisle of the nave where there stands a Victorian font. Look toward the sanctuary and the altar with its colourful reredos which can be seen at close quarters later. Above it, is the great East window representing the Crucifixion, an example of the early work of C. E. Kempe.

Turn around and see the modern West window of the Ascension, made by Christopher Webb in 1962. Beneath this window are three interesting boards. From the second church comes the Commandment board and the Creed board and between them the national arms of the United Kingdom. This was evidently made in 1811, as the churchwardens' accounts for that year show a sum of £4.10s paid to a Mr Roden for a 'Coat of Arms,' which would be displayed as a mark of loyalty to the King, then George 111. Another stone font from the second church stands near this west wall.

Pass slowly down the centre aisle as all the stone carving is worth examination. The pillars on the south side are circular, those on the north, octagonal. No two capitals are exactly alike, and their carving is beautifully undercut. Look up to the clerestory where only opposite windows are alike. Beyond in the side aisles, note that the stone tracery of each window is different from the others. Further examples of fine glass emanating from the Kampe workshops can be seen in these windows.



West window

War Memorial Plaque

A diversion into the north aisle will reveal two beautifully carved oak memorials to the fallen in two World Wars and a water colour sketch of the second church. This was painted by Mr Francis Doyle who was to become architect of the present church in 1879.



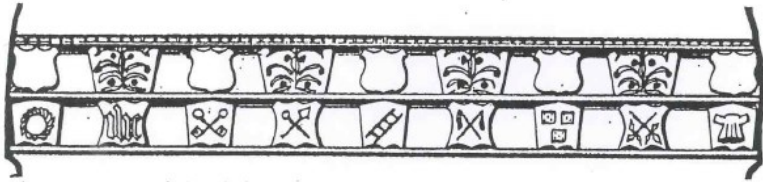
The Kneelers

Looking down at the pews, you will see the remarkable collection of kneelers - made in the 1980s. This labour of love was done by members of our congregations. It is soon evident that a wide range of designs have been used, linked by a certain uniformity of colour. The detail is extremely fine and is achieved by skilled guidance on the one hand and a willingness to accept the disciplines necessary to produce such perfection on the other. Among the designs are symbols, logos, crests, pictorial representations and geometric patterns. Here are some examples:-



The Chancel

Enter the chancel and on the left is the three manual organ built by Rushworth and Dreaper in 1947 and modernised in 1974. The processional cross is French 15th century, stamped and engraved silver and gilt copper, on a fountain of wood set with crystals. Above the choir stalls on the south side the implements of the Passion are carved in sandstone in the form of a border. These same emblems can be seen in greater detail in the large circular light of the East window; the ladder, dice, head-dress, crown, robes, scourges, title, sponge and spear, surrounding the sacred shield. In the circular lights on either side are the Angels of the sun and moon; in the light above, the crossed swords of St. Paul and the keys of St. Peter.



The instruments of the Passion seen in the border above the south choir stalls

Fonts



*Victorian Fonts
used before 1918*



*Ancient Font
stored in the Tithe Barn
from the old Children's Church)*



*Current font
at the back of St. Peter's*



The reredos over the high altar



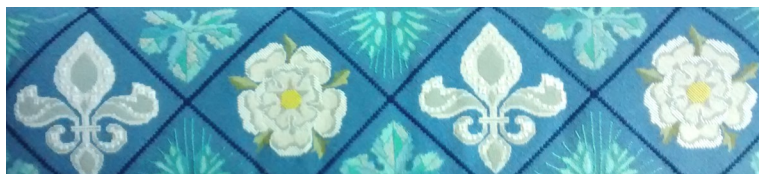
The design of the kneeler at the communion rail in front of the main altar incorporates wheat and vine leaves symbolising the bread and wine of the Sacrament and the crossed and reversed keys of St. Peter.

The Lady Chapel

Step carefully through the small arch to the aisle chapel, sometimes known as the Brocklebank Chapel but more often as the Lady Chapel. This was built in 1893 when the new church was enlarged and improved by extending the chancel eight feet eastwards, all at the expense of Mr and Mrs Thomas Brocklebank, from the designs of Mr Francis Doyle. The splendid wrought iron screen was a gift from the women communicants and was probably made by Thomas Barlow, the local blacksmith of that day. A beautiful painting of our Lord from the 16th Century Flemish school forms the altar piece. Examples of the Church Plate collected over four centuries are often displayed here on special occasions, A Delia Robin tablet representing St. Bridget teaching children to pray is to be seen at the west end of the chapel. It was made by Mr Rathbone of Birkenhead, presented by him in memory of Miss Brocklebank and restored by Mrs Pat Bridge of Willaston in 1981. Again the windows are outstanding. The East window represents the restoration of St. Peter, whilst on the south side we see the call of St. Peter, the three Apostles in Gethsemane; the denial of St. Peter and St. Peter and St John at the tomb of Jesus' resurrection.



The design of the kneeler at the communion rail uses varying shades of blue, green and cream; these echo the colours of the Chapel windows. The motifs of fleur-de-lys and rose symbolise the Virgin Mary. The stylised ears of corn and vine leaves are different from those on the kneelers at the main altar, as the photograph below shows.



A step outside St. Peter's

On leaving the church, look more carefully at the 15 century tower, which has been part of all three churches on this side. It has housed a ring of bells for well over 400 years but in 1979, two more bells were added to complete the octave.

The letters 'H.D.' inlaid in lead near the top of the south face of the tower (only the 'D' now remains) and a Talbot or hound on the West face suggest that Hugh Davenport, patron of the living in 1461, could well have been responsible for the building. Restoration of the tower has been carried out several times since then. It is interesting to note that the private patronage of our church still remains with the Bromley Davenport family, now resident at Capesthorne.

A turned stone column mounted on two circular steps carries a sundial inscribed 'H.H.R.N.1726' the initials probably being those of the churchwardens at the time. Nearby is perhaps the oldest stone in the churchyard recording the death of William Burtch in 1728. This surname was to be changed several times through the ages until assuming its present form of Birch. Like other family names such as Barlow, Ellis, Hough, Rutler, and Totty, it is recorded in our parish registers, which are now deposited for safe keeping at the Records Office in Chester. They are among the earliest in existence, dating back to 1539 but that's another story!

