

St Peter's, Old Woking



St Peter's is a Grade I listed building and the listing is as follows:

Church. C12, chancel addition C13, tower C15, south porch C16. Vestry added and Church restored in 1886. Mortar rendered rubble-stone with carstone in nave walling, freestone ashlar to tower, brick south porch, rendered chancel and flint vestry; plain tiled roofs. West tower, 3 bay nave, south aisle and porch, chancel to east with vestry addition to north corner. 2 stage tower, angle buttresses to first stage containing tiles and brickwork, brick dressed square casement window over arched west door. Battlemented unbuttressed stage above with clock face on north and west sides. South porch with centre roll moulded depressed arch to door, niches to either side, crow-stepped gable above. C13 Lancet windows to south side of chancel, renewed 3 light window to east with curvilinear tracery, renewed C15 windows to south aisle.

West door within the tower c1100, oak with large iron C straps and horizontal bands in roll moulded arched surround with cushion capitals to piers.

Octagonal piers to south aisle arcade, 3 crown post trusses to nave roof, chancel arch doubled chamfered to choir, single chamfer to nave.

*Fittings: **Arcaded west gallery dated 1622**, pulpit in similar style, although altered, having lozenge patterning. Nave font C19, stone decorated Gothic style, bowl on stem with surrounding marble columns. Some late mediaeval pews survive the remainder are copies.*

Monuments: Chancel North wall: Sophia Flayer Jervis died 1834: Grey and white marble draped female figure on coffin. South wall: Johannes Lloyd, died 1663: stone artisan tablet with open pediment enclosing smaller segmental pediment to top, strapwork decoration, central black marble tablet. Nave: North wall: William Harvest, died 1741, grey marble panel, flanking piers and crowning acorn. Reverend R. Emily, died 1792 by R. Westmacott Snr; White marble, fluted piers flanking a pedimented niche, central draped urns, scrolls to cill. South Aisle: South wall: Thomas Bund, died 1776, grey and white marble obelisk top winged cherubs heads below. John Merest, died 1752, white marble, fluted Ionic pilasters with flanking scrolls, crowning cherubs heads either side of a coat of arms, gadrooning to base.

Brasses: To John Shadhet, died 1527, Isabelle and Henry Purdon died 1523: standing figures with hands folded in prayer.

There was a minister church at Woking and evidence exists suggesting that this early church was in being in 690 or 775. The earliest part of the present building is Norman and it is possible that it occupies the same site as the original minister foundation although there is no evidence to substantiate this.

The Tower

As the listing states, this appears to have been built in two stages, a 15th century date being given for the whole. Pevsner suggests 13th century for the base and 15th century for the top which dates are probably correct. The church guide has 13th century for the base but around 1340 for the top! The stone used for the top was originally thought to be sarsen but has now been identified as heath-stone which the OED defines as *a name given by builders to a description of sandstone that occurs in irregular masses in the Bagshot sands.*

The inside of the tower has four levels – the ground floor lobby, the ringing chamber, the clock chamber and above this, the bell chamber. The clock chamber is at the level of the heath-stone exterior and has a series of ‘put-logs’ on all four walls presumably used in the construction of the tower. There are narrow windows on three of the sides with the remains of the old Norman west window on the fourth side. The top of the chamber is made up of heavy beams supporting the bells in the chamber above.

The base of the tower accommodates the ground floor lobby and the ringing chamber. The outside has been much repaired as can be seen from the variety of materials used for these repairs. Careful inspection of the north and south aspects of the base reveals a blocked up window on each aspect. Although it is difficult to tell, these windows appear to have been of some size and were probably filled in to provide a secure base when the top was rebuilt.

The stone used for the top of the tower would appear to be similar to that used for the construction of the Palace vault and may well be of the same date and source. It is likely that the tower was re-built as a watchtower possibly at the instigation of the Beauforts at the near by manor house.

The Memorials

At the time that John Aubrey wrote his *The Natural History and Antiquities of Surrey (1673-92)* there were a number of memorials in St Peter's church which relate to Woking Palace. Aubrey's book is helpful in listing these. Many have disappeared but some remain today including the inscription on the Gallery '*This Gallery was erected at the Charge of the Right Worshipfull Sr.Edward Zouch Kt. and Knight Marshall of England, An. Dni. 1622*'. James II had granted the Palace to Sir Edward in 1620.

The Zouch memorial, with its Latin inscription which in translation appears fulsome and strangely worded, is now in the south wall of the chancel. At the time Aubrey was writing, this was on the north wall, but the commemorative brass plate was moved when the new vestry and organ chamber were erected at the end of the nineteenth century.

A translation of the Latin text of the memorial is

THE TOMB

of Lord Edward Zouch, a most noble and glorious gentleman, a golden knight of their most serene majesties King James and King Charles, a princely Marshal for as long as he lived.

The Zouch family rightly placed in this marble vault all that is mortal of the earthly traveller. A sense of duty, a pristine loyalty, the gratitude of monarchs, generous strength of mind, candour and integrity, bountiful skill, attachment to his family, a noble pedigree, and an extensive holding of landed property all these ought to have kept any man free of death; at all events, verily this man ought not to have been capable of dying. However, envious death has by no means snatched him wholly away. It possesses nothing other than the spoils of his body (or his physical attributes). The better of him has reached heaven, whence it

originally came. Our sense of loss and his reputation outlive this world.

His grieving (or mourning) spouse justly longs for her husband (or rightly mourns) the best of husbands

He departed this life on the seventh day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and thirty four.

Unfortunately a number of memorials mentioned by Aubrey in his book have disappeared for one reason or another. These include:

- *In a North Window are these Arms, viz. England, a Bordure Argent; this belonged to Edmund of Woodstock, Earl of Kent, Son to King Edw. I.* According to Manning and Bray, King Edward III in the first year of his reign gave the Manor of Woking to Edmund of Woodstock.
- on a brass plate, fixed to a gravestone *within the Communion Rails (Manning and Bray), Here Lyeth Anne Deveres, eldest Daughter to my Lord Fferys of Charteley. On her Soule, Jesu have Merci*. Mill Stephenson suggests in his book *A List of Monumental Brasses in Surrey 1921* that she was *‘Possibly a daughter of Sir Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers in right of his wife Anne, only daughter and heiress of William, Lord Ferrers. He (Sir Walter) was created a knight of the garter in 1470, and slain at Bosworth in 1485, fighting for Richard III.’*

In 1469 Lady Margaret Beaufort became concerned for the safety of her son Henry Tudor, later to become Henry VII, who had been under the care of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and his wife Anne Devereux at Raglan. In that year Warwick rebelled against Edward IV and Herbert was summoned to Edward’s assistance but his forces suffered bloody defeat at Edgecote. Herbert was captured and executed by Warwick. The twelve year old Henry had accompanied Herbert but fortunately news arrived that the boy had been led from the battlefield and escorted to the home of Sir Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers, the brother of Herbert’s wife.

The association between Lady Margaret and her son with William Herbert and Sir Walter probably explains why the latter’s daughter was buried in St Peter’s so near to the altar of Lady Margaret’s parish church.

- a brass plate with *the Figure of a Man in a Gown, with wide Sleeves, bearing in a baudry a Bugle Horn about his Neck, and a Hanger by his Side, and a Hound at his Feet* with an inscription, lost in Aubrey’s time, to *Gilberti Gilpyn quondam Parcarii* (park keeper) *of Woking Parke* who died 10th December 1500.

Gilbert Gilpyn, was originally steward of the household to Lady Margaret Beaufort and her third husband, Henry Stafford and came from Westmoreland. He had come into Stafford's service through Lady Margaret's properties in Kendal. Gilpyn chose to settle in Woking, and supervised affairs there until his death in 1500. On 13 April 1471 a horse was purchased for him, as he prepared to ride with his master to do battle for Edward IV at Barnet. (*The King's Mother, Michael K Jones and Malcolm G Underwood. 1992*)

The Gallery

The gallery was presented to the church by Sir Edward Zouch in 1622. It was around this time that Sir Edward abandoned the Palace and built himself a house at Hoe Bridge using, it is said, materials from the abandoned Palace. It would be tempting to suppose that the gallery too was taken from this source.

The structure stretches across the nave and south aisle. The older portion is in the nave. That part which is in the south aisle is obviously of a latter date. The dimensions of the older portion are such that the original gallery would have fitted in the Great Hall of the Palace. Only dendrochronology could show whether any credence should be given to the hypothesis. If investigation revealed that the timber of which the gallery is made came from a tree felled in the early 16th century or before, this would make the hypothesis possible. An early 17th century date would mean that the gallery was probably built specifically for presentation to the church. Unfortunately, the timber used was *fast dried* and, therefore, unsuitable for dendrochronology.

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