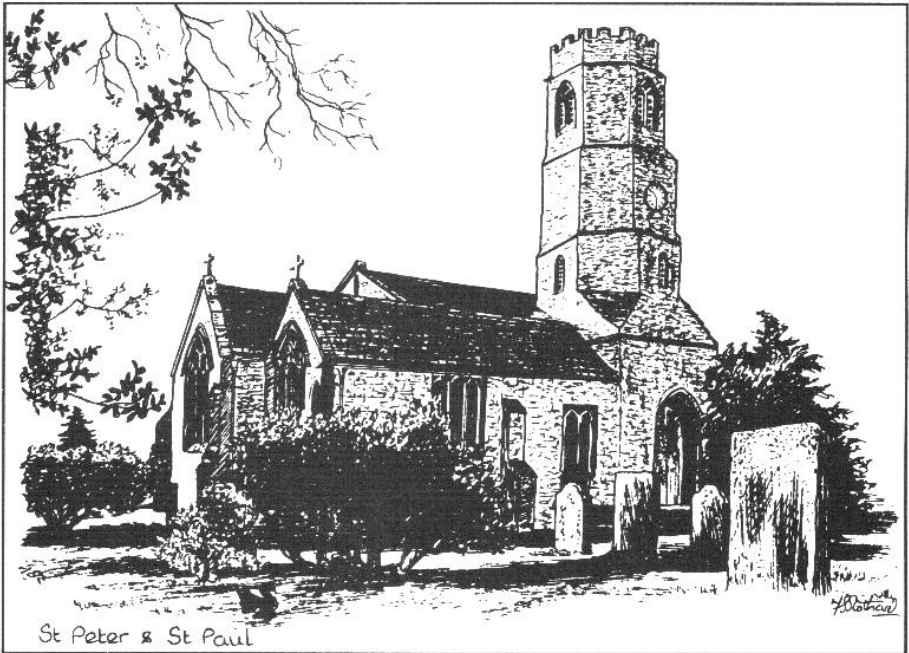


A Guided Tour of the church of

# St Peter and St Paul

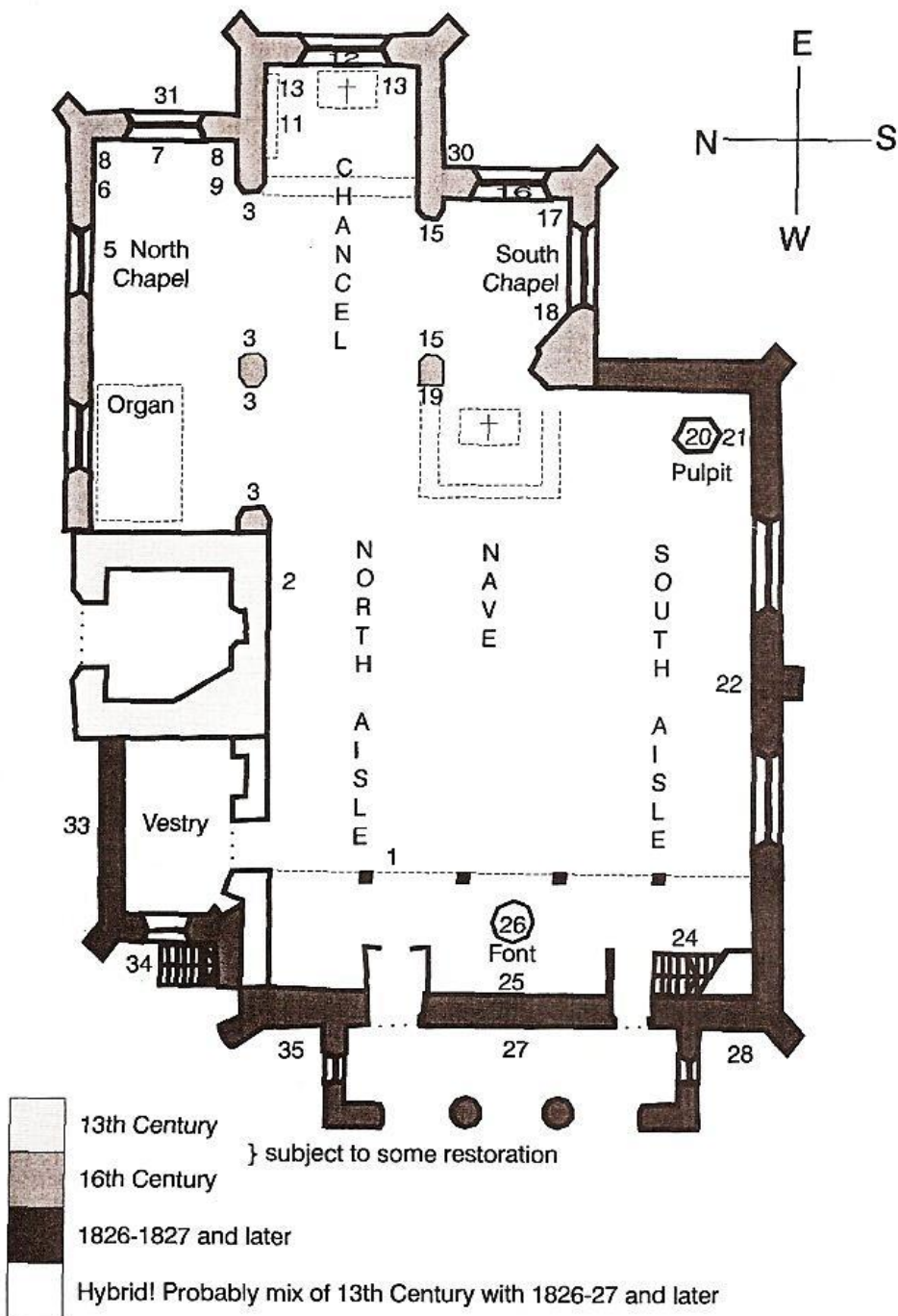
## Bishop's Hull, Taunton

Let this guide show you around our church  
and answer your questions.  
It will take about half an hour.



*"We love the place, O God,  
Wherein Thine honour dwells;  
The joy of Thine abode  
All earthly joys excels"*

*William Bullock, 1854*



Numbers refer to paragraphs where necessary

# A Guided tour of St Peter and St Pauls, Bishop's Hull

## EASTWARDS ALONG THE NORTH AISLE

### **1 Royal Arms**

On the gallery immediately over the aisle is the Royal Arms of James I. The Royal Arms emphasised the Sovereign's status as head of the Church of England. Our Churchwardens' accounts of 12 April 1607 for the preceding year contain the entry: '*Paid for washing the church for setting up the King's Arms according to a commonlaw and by agreement of divers parishioners...53 shillings and 4 pence.*' Probably this meant white-washing the walls to make the church worthy of the great day.

### **2 A Full Life**

The Latin inscription high up on the wall commemorates a man of very great ability and achievement. Born in December 1670, educated at Eton, and King's College, Cambridge, James Upton returned to Eton at the request of the head as an assistant master. Later he was invited to teach at Ilminster and lastly at Taunton Grammar School. He must have been a wonderful teacher for is it said he was followed hither by his former pupils from Ilminster and that the school became the largest provincial grammar school in the country. He was a distinguished classical scholar and grammarian and published many works, notably, but not exclusively, on the Greek classics. He was also much involved with the Church: he had been ordained a priest in 1701, and was presented by Lord Sydenham first to the rectory of Brimpton, near Yeovil, and later to that of Monksilver. In 1731 he became our vicar, and he died here in August 1749 at the age of 78. Commemorated too is Mary '*His most faithful wife ten times in labour.*' He had married her while at Eton.

### **3 The Arches**

Before entering the north chapel examine the arches. They are of a type very common from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> to mid-16<sup>th</sup> century especially in the West Country. Basically, the pillars consist of four round shafts sunk into four flat surfaces connected by four concave surfaces. The capitals, often plain, in our case are embellished with angels, each differently engaged. There are similar embellishments in St Mary's, Taunton.

## **INSIDE THE NORTH CHAPEL**

### **4 The West End**

The West End is occupied by the organ, which obscures a window of two lights. On the side of the organ casing is a charity board. The 'second poor' for whom in 1596 John Burt left the then enormous sum of £60 were those who did not receive relief from the parish.

**Update a:** The church pipe organ was suffering from a rotting frame and the advice was to remove it from the church. In 2012 it was removed by Matthew Copley of Organ Design and the area was restored into a much appreciated and well-used chapel area.

### **5 Window in North Wall**

From left to right the light depict: the Blessed Virgin Mary holding a Madonna lily (a symbol of purity), Our Lord as the Good Shepherd, and Saint John (identified by chalice).

### **6 A Musical Prodigy**

Dr Crotch, whose epitaph is prominent on the north wall, was a child prodigy. Born poor, he is said to have played the organ and harpsichord at the age of three and soon the violin. His mother exploited his talents by taking him on extensive tours around the country. He even played before King George III. His son was a master of the Grammar School in Taunton and it was while visiting him in 1847 that the Doctor died suddenly at table. His grandson had died in 1837 and the two are buried together in Bishop's Hull.

### **7 The East Window**

The tracery (ornamental stonework in the upper part of the window) has some 16<sup>th</sup> century glass and the designs are significantly similar to those of a south transept window in St Mary's, Huish Episcopi. The glass of the lights below shows Jesus between St Peter and St Paul, and is late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **8 The Mystery of the Four Brackets**

On the wall on each side of the window are two pairs of brackets. We don't know their purpose, but suspect the lower pair supported statues. These are adorned with angels, the one on the left holding a shield and the other a scroll on which is incised A(nn)o D(omin)i 1530, most reasonably the date when the building of the chapel was completed. The upper pair of brackets,

more substantial and cruder, might have supported a beam and been transferred from another part of the church, or perhaps it was from the exterior.

## **9 The South Wall**

The small recess in the wall to the left of the arches is called credence, used for holding the bread and wine before their consecration in the days when the chapel had an altar and Communion was celebrated there.

## **10 The Roof**

Before moving into the chancel look up at the roof. It is of the wagon or barrel type, very popular in the West Country, and is original. Note the circular ornaments (paterae) that occur on the cornice along the top of the north wall, in threes between successive ribs.

## **INSIDE THE CHANCEL**

### **11 The Farewell Memorial**

The kindly looking gentleman whose magnificent alabaster effigy occupies the north wall is George Farewell who lived in the 'Great House', now loosely called the manor. He is said to have added the wings and porch, the date above the porch revealing that this was completed in 1586. The memorial was set up by his son, Sir George. The inscription, fulsome in its praise of his qualities as a law-abiding citizen, a churchman and much-loved family man, records that he died in 1609 at the age of 72, and that he was an Esquire and Justice of the Peace. I have read that in June 1588 he made a donation of £25 in support of resistance to the Spanish Armada. On the side of the monument are nine exquisitely carved figures, the closest surviving relatives who mourned him, three sons, his wife and five daughters. Note that all three sons carry swords and the third is in armour: two Esquires and a Knight – Sir George in fact.

**Update b:** In 2013 movement was noted in the north wall above the monument and this area is now under architectural investigation so that a solution can be found and the structure repaired.

## 12 The East Window

There is an attractive tidiness and completeness about this window: in the small lights of the top three lines of tracery our minds are directed to the Trinity:

- a) The single top light portrays a dove, frequently used for the Holy Spirit.
- b) The two lights of the second line remind us of Our Lord: on the left is the mythical pelican who gave its blood to save its young reminding us of the sacrifice of Christ for mankind; on the right is the Lamb of God with the banner of victory over death and sin.
- c) In the third line of lights we think of God – Laus Deo (praise be to God) and Soli Deo Gloria (to God alone be the glory) and between these are four ministering angels.

In the main lights of the window are the most important events in the Gospel story:

- a) In the three centre lights are, in order bottom to top, the Nativity, the Crucifixion and a literal interpretation of the Ascension.
- b) In the upper lights beside the Ascension is a literal interpretation of John 12 verse 32, *'And I, when I am lifted up from earth, will draw all people to myself'* (NSRV)
- c) In the first and last bottom lights are seen the Baptism of Jesus (with the Holy Spirit descending as a dove), and finally the Last Supper.

## 13 The Reredos

The two outer compartments of the reredos – the screen behind the altar – contain the most important memoranda of our Faith: the Lord's Prayer, The Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed. The display of these in churches was ordered long ago in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. In the centre compartments are three devices – the Star of David, the Cross with a dove perched on an olive branch, and the Alpha and Omega monogram.

What is the significance of these?

There may not be a unique solution, but I like to read them as encapsulating the Gospel story: The Star of David – the birth of Jesus (because the birth was signalled by a star and the Lord was of David's lineage); the cross with dove – the Crucifixion which reconciled man with God (the dove here indicating reconciliation); Alpha and Omega – the Resurrection of Jesus (because in the book of Revelation these, the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet, are used to represent the Risen Christ – 'The First and the Last')

## **14 The Roof**

Again a wagon roof but restored, and with brightly painted bosses at the intersections.

## **INSIDE THE SOUTH CHAPEL**

### **15 The Arch**

The arch leading from the chancel is similar to those leading from chancel to the north chapel but not identical.

- Can you spot the difference?

### **16 The East Window**

The two centre compartments of the tracery depict the coats-of-arms of the Maclean family of Upcott House and of the Gunstons of Frethey House. The remainder of the coloured glass – the rose and the two pomegranate designs and the plain glass – are medieval as also are the tiny designs in the cusps of the south window of this chapel.

### **17 A Piscina**

The recess in the south wall near the corner is a piscina, used by the priest for washing his fingers before consecrating the wine, and for rinsing the chalice. Close by, beneath the east window there must have been an altar.

### **18 A Fireplace**

In the south-west corner of this chapel is a fireplace! I believe there used to be a Turkish carpet too! The chapel became the private chapel of the Cowan family, and they would have furnished it to their own comfort.

## **SOUTHWARDS ALONG THE EAST END OF THE NAVE**

### **19 The Arch**

Notice the flat surface of the left pillar of the arch between nave and south chapel. This was probably created when the arcade (row of arches) between nave and south aisle was destroyed in the enlargement of the church in 1826-1827.

## **20 The Pulpit**

The panels of the pulpit were taken from the rood screen, which once separated chancel from nave and on top of which was the rood (Crucifix). The pulpit originally stood upon a stone base, later removed in favour of the present one of carved oak which matches the panels.

- Examine these panels: does something strike you as rather strange, perhaps almost untidy?

## **WESTWARDS ALONG THE SOUTH AISLE**

### **21 Memorial to Sir George & Lady Farewell**

The memorial nearest the corner records the death of Sir George in 1647 and Lady Farewell in 1660. It tells that they had 20 children. Not recorded is Sir George's munificence in establishing a charity to aid the poor. This he did by conveying to his son and heir, George, and successors two pieces of land in Bishop's Hull (curiously named 'Doubles' and 'Whipples') to provide an annual income to the poor of three parishes: 24 shillings for Bishop's Hull, 16 shillings for St Mary Magdalene's and 8 shillings for St James'.

### **22 Monument of Three Little Children**

The three children huddled together are Edmund, Elizabeth and Mary Fowell (not Farewell), great-grandchildren of Sir George Farewell. Edmund was buried in 1661 before he was one, and Mary in 1673 when less than three months. I have been unable to find Elizabeth in our parish registers. The memorials above the children's are of their mother and grandmother.

### **23 The Box Pews**

One might think the box pews very old, but they are not: they were installed when the church was altered in 1826-27. Most pews were rented from the church by members of the congregation, hence the numbers on their sides, but a few were free and marked accordingly. In early medieval times there would probably have been no pews, just a stone bench around the walls for the old and infirm.



## **NORTHWARDS ALONG THE WEST ENDS OF THE NAVE**

### **24 Roll of Honour**

Near the corner is Bishop's Hull Roll of Honour for the Great War.

### **25 The Bench Ends**

Now placed along the west wall are seven beautifully carved bench ends of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. One depicts the Resurrection and below it a pelican feeding its young. Another is of a night-watchman with a club in his right hand.

**Update c:** in 2011 the two bench-ends mentioned above were loaned to (and can be seen in) The Museum of Somerset in Taunton.

### **26 The Font**

The font is not the original one, but came from St Mary Magdalene's. As with many fonts it is octagonal, reminding us of 1 Peter 3 verses 20, 21, *'when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through the water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you...'* (NRSV). (The eight were Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives).

## **OUTSIDE ANTI-CLOCKWISE AROUND THE CHURCH**

### **27 The Porch**

The west end porch in its present form was built in 1956. At the same time the forecourt was refashioned and the wrought-iron gate made to replicate its arches.

### **28 The Pulpit Base**

Between the end of the porch and the buttress is the discarded base of the pulpit.

### **29 South Wall of the Nave**

The wall belongs to the 1826-27 enlargement but the windows are from the wall of the original south aisle, albeit restored. There is a modern sundial to the right of the chimney stack.

### **30 Corner of South Chapel and Chancel**

The angles stonework suggests a blocked up doorway; perhaps there was a priest's door to give access to the chancel, or perhaps a private entrance to the chapel.

### **31 East Window of North Chapel**

The stops at the end of the hood-mould over the window are adorned with angels, one holding a book and the other a shield, just as is the case on the capitals of this chapel's arches within.

### **32 The Tower**

Architecturally this is the most interesting feature of the church. At ground level is the ancient porch, square and entered through a superb arch the style of which is 13<sup>th</sup> century. At the top of the porch is a thin projecting line termed a string course, and it occurs between storeys of the tower. Henceforth the tower is octagonal; note the neat way in which the change of shape is effected – by a half-pyramid construction called a broach. Within the first octagonal storey is the bellringers' room, the next storey houses the clock, and the top storey the belfry. The tower is completed by a battlement. The ringing of the bells caused the tower to sway and to overcome this the bells were lowered to the former ringer' room and are rung from ground level. Tradition has it that the octagonal tower, which was probably added to the porch at a later date, was a gift from the local weaving industry.

There are six bells. The tenor was made by George Purdoe of Taunton in 1608 and weighs 1141 pounds. The oldest bell was made about 1550 by Roger Semson of Ash Priors and weighs 882 pounds. The newest is in fact a recast one of 1688 and was obtained when the bells were returned and rehung by Mears and Stainbank's Foundary, Whitechapel.

### **33 The Crotch Grave**

Alongside the vestry are two tombstones: the one on the left was set up to commemorate Edward Crotch who died in 1837; then when his grandfather died in 1847 and was buried alongside him the epitaph was extended. Much of the inscription has been eroded but it has been possible to recover the text:

Line 1	EDWARD THOMAS CROTCH
Line 2	BORN OCTOBER 28 <sup>TH</sup> 1834
Line 3	DIED AUGUST 20 <sup>TH</sup> 1837

Line 4 (FIRST) THESS. IV. 13-18  
Line 5 WILLIAM CROTCH MUS DOC  
Line 6 BORN JULY 5<sup>TH</sup> 1775  
Line 7 DIED DECEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup> 1847

In 1902 the Royal Academy of Music decided that their first Principal should be accorded a grander memorial and erected the white marble stone alongside.

### **34 The Vestry Window**

The small window on the west wall of the 1827 vestry is, I believe, an example of one of the earliest types of bar tracery, so called because it is assembled from stone bars, the method superseding plate tracery made by piercing the plate of stone between the tops of lancet windows. Belonging to the 13<sup>th</sup> century it must have been transferred from another part of the church when the vestry was built, maybe from the old north wall.

### **35 The Redundant Font**

The font to the left of the modern porch is reputedly the predecessor of the present one from St Mary's. Often the original font of a church remains for it seldom wears out and there is sentimental attachment to it.

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### **Answers to Questions on the Tour**

Para 15: Arch of south chapel has no angels in its capitals.

Para 20: One panel is repeated. Perhaps the rood screen from which the panels came had only five different designs.

### **Some Interesting Dates:**

1157-61 A charter within this date span includes a chapel at Bishop's Hull as one of the endowments of Taunton Priory.

1308 The Bishop of Bath and Wells orders the Priory to appoint a secular priest on a separate stipend to serve and live in Bishop's Hull. (Hitherto services would have been taken by a Priory canon).

1447-48 Our Churchwardens pay 20d and an annual rent of 1d for a piece of land for a church house.

1522-40	The existence of a document of 1522 referring to building a new chancel, the date of 1530 in our north chapel, and a 1540 will leaving 40d towards the cost of a consecration, taken together suggest major work on the east end of the church (see entry for 1597 below)
1535	The valuation of Church property records our priest's stipend as £6 per year.
1539	Dissolution of the Priory.
1597	An entry in the churchwardens' accounts confirms that by now the church has two aisles: ' <i>Payd to the hellier more for mending of the church and 2 illes ... 6d.</i> ' A hellier was a tiler).
1642-45	Our Registers record the burials of 16 soldiers during the Civil War.
1826-27	Major enlargements of church: south arcade dismantled, south wall rebuilt several feet to south but windows retained; old nave roof superseded by present vast one; west end porch and vestry built.
1923	Galleries along north and south walls removed.
1951-52	Electric lighting installed.
1993-94	Nave floor replaced; some C17 gravestones found beneath; altar, pulpit and font repositioned.

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*Thank you...*

*"Our huge thanks go to John Whitehouse and those who supported him in researching the information and creating this document. Without your faithful work it would not be possible to enjoy the information contained with this guide."*

Mr Whitehouse died in December 2012. His wife, Mary, continued to live in Bishop's Hull until she moved in August 2015 to be closer to family.

Rev Phil Hughes,  
 Vicar of Bishop's Hull and Chaplain to Somerset College  
**Church Website: [www.stpeterandstpaul.org.uk](http://www.stpeterandstpaul.org.uk)**

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