

Statement of Significance

Ging ad Petram (the parcel of land by the stone) was a Saxon settlement of 430 acres and a dozen peasants listed in the Domesday Survey as 'belonging always to St. Mary at Berking'. It was to form part of the later parish of Ingatestone. Tradition is that a Saxon Church stood on the site. A small Norman Church was built between 1080 and 1100, 44ft by 18ft. The present North wall of the nave shows the extent of the nave.

Two centuries later the settlement had grown into a medieval village with a market, two annual fairs and the need for a larger church. The south wall was re-erected 14ft further out and replaced by three arches. This can be dated by a Manor Court action in 1305 against a tenant of the Abbess of Barking for withholding her due share of the cost, 16s 8d. The same document suggests that the present tower may be at least the third belfry, for the tax claimed was for 'the new belfry and the walls around the church'. About 1470 – 1510 the present tower was added. The East wall was rebuilt in brick in 1620s. Early in the 17th century Sir William Petre's grandson, William 2nd Lord Petre, added the North Chapel with its massive memorial to John, the first Baron, who died in 1613, followed by his wife in 1624.

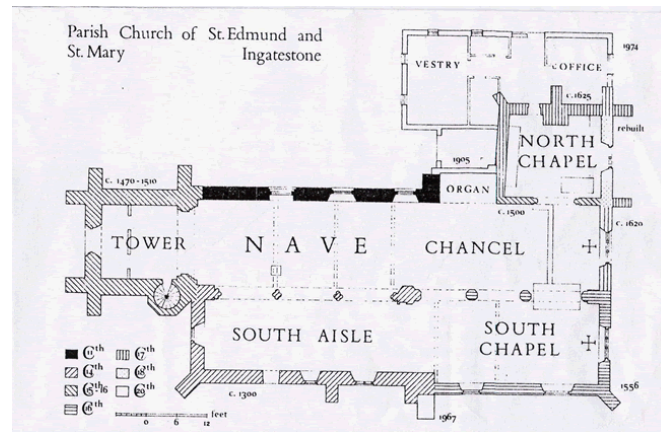
The Tower is the dominant feature of the church. This is described by Simon Jenkins in *England's Thousand Best Churches* (published 1999) as 'magnificent, a unified Perpendicular composition of red brick with black Tudor diapering. Strong angled buttresses rise to a heavy battlemented crown, the bell openings plain.'

Between the chancel and the south chapel, is an alabaster memorial to 2nd Lord Petre. This is attributed to Cornelius Cure, court mason. The south chapel contains memorials to Robert Petre and sea captain John Troughton. The later is by Epiphanius Evesham.

Before the Reformation, it is believed that the church may have had many altars. There were certainly many images in what must have been a very colourful church. During the restorations of 1866/7 a mural of the Seven Deadly Sins was disclosed west of the pulpit, dated 1400. It is in the form of a wheel, 7ft 2in in diameter. It was covered up. A coloured copy, a quarter-size, is in the Essex Records Office. A document in the Petre Muniments from the early 16th century lists many images to be found in the church. One of these images, that of St. Christopher, was also found in 1866 on the north wall near the tower. This was also covered.

The church contains no visible pre-Reformation fittings or decoration. Essex was a mainly Puritan area, and a sternly Commonwealth Rector, John Willis, incumbent for 32 years until deprived for non-conformity in 1662, no doubt continued the transformation of the church to reflect its new Protestant character. The wooden communion table may well date from his incumbency. A wooden three decker pulpit, a Jacobean font cover, a barrel organ, box pews and a gallery in the tower were all removed in the 'restoration' of 1886/7. The only remaining feature from the Puritan period is an iron hour glass stand just west of the pulpit, positioned over the covered up mural.

The present interior of the church owes much to the work of Frederick Chancellor, the architect of the 1886/7 restorations. In 1905 an organ chamber in red brick was built at the north east corner. A hot air heating system was installed in 1953, which included placing a heater in the north doorway, which had been in use since 1080. In 1966 the Victorian deal-and-plush inner lobby at the west end was removed opening up the tower arch. The approach up to the chancel through the choir was also widened during this time. Owing to continual problems with damp, the Victorian benches installed by Chancellor had deteriorated to such poor condition that replacements were sought in the early 1970s. Those installed were Edwardian pine and were available through the demolition of a Barnardo's Chapel in Barkingside. In 1974 new vestries were added, including a small kitchen and a toilet. In the early 1990s the benches were removed from the Lady Chapel and replaced by chairs. The history of the building has been a history of change.



Statement of needs

There has been considerable discussion within the church for many years concerning the kind of developments best suited to the needs of the congregation and the use of the building. In 2005 a general consultation was undertaken concerning the seating and heating. In recent years there have been consultations with members of the Diocesan Advisory Committee. Following this lengthy period of consultation and giving consideration to all views expressed, the P.C.C. felt in a position to offer three resolutions to all members of the church at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 22nd of April 2007. The existing Edwardian second-hand choir benches were of poor quality. They were uncomfortable and inflexible. The desire was to make a flexible space that could be used in a number of ways in worship and also in wider activities. Local craftsman Michael Bysouth had been commissioned to produce designs for new choir desks, behind which two chairs could be placed. These were displayed at the A.P.C.M. where three resolutions were passed.

Resolution. That the P.C.C. be empowered to proceed with that which is necessary to install choir desks. *Passed unanimously*, money was raised to purchase the required number at the meeting.

They are now in the church.

Chris Dunphy Ecclesiastical Ltd were approached to produce a plan for a radiator system set against the outside walls and supplied by a modern highly efficient boiler. **Their proposal was priced at £44,150. The system was fully explained at the A.P.C.M.**

Resolution. That the P.C.C. be empowered to proceed with that which is necessary to install a new heating system in the church.

Passed unanimously.

The P.C.C. feel that glazing in the arch between the Petre Chapel and the main body of the church will enable the chapel to be developed as an area that can be used as a crèche during services. It will also provide a room that would be available for numerous other purposes. It is acknowledged that architectural drawings will be required. These should be obtained after the installation of the heating system.

Resolution.

The P.C.C. be empowered to proceed with that which is necessary to fit glazing between the Petre Chapel and the Church.

Passed unanimously.

Work is also being planned on improved lighting. When all the above is completed, general decoration will need to take place.

If you would like to support financially the new heating system, and the other work planned for the church building, please contact the P.C.C. Treasurer, Martin Taylor, 16 Tor Bryan, Ingatestone, CM4 9HJ. Please consider gift aiding your contribution, which adds 28p to every £1.