

INSPECTION OF CHURCHES MEASURE, 1955

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PETER, BIRCH.

R E P O R T

at the request of

THE REV. H.W. GIDDINGS, A.K.C., R.A.F.,

OCTOBER 1983.

R.A.W. ORRIN, F.R.I.B.A.,
Chartered Architect,
7, West Stockwell Street,
Colchester, Essex. CO1 1HW.

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DESCRIPTION:

The present Church of St. Peter was built in 1850 on the site of an earlier 12th Century Church (demolished to permit building of the present Church).

The Building consists of Chancel and Nave with Aisles on the North and South sides, each formed with arcading of five arches, stone columns and end responds.

A Tower is constructed above the last bay or arcading at the West end of the North Aisle with bell chamber and stone broached spire superimposed. The end of the aisle below the Tower is screened off with wood panelling of varnished pine to form Clergy and Choir Vestries.

The entrance porch is built out from the South aisle and a heating chamber alongside the North wall of the Chancel. This heating chamber was originally the Vestry but the access door in the North wall of the Chancel is disused and is securely fixed to avoid a considerable drop down to the boiler below.

The East end of the South aisle is fitted with a side altar, forming a small Memorial Chapel.

The Church is without historical interest, typical of its period, and pleasantly sited on elevated ground, surrounded by the Churchyard with an expanse of open greensward to the West, beyond the Entrance Gateway

EXTENT OF SURVEY:

The whole of the structure was inspected except for the internal upper part of the Spire which was examined from the Bell Chamber level and the Valley gutter between the Nave and North Aisle which was inspected to the extent limited by viewing possible from the Tower Louvred window openings. I have not inspected the roof timbers in detail, full scaffolded platforms and boarded walkways would be necessary.

NOTE:- I have not inspected woodwork or other parts of the Structure which were covered, unexposed or inaccessible and I am, therefore, unable to report that any such part of the property is free from defec

WALLS AND
MASONRY:

The Church is constructed with external flint rubble walling and limestone dressings finished internally with lime plaster decorated with lime wash.

Considerable reconstruction has been carried out to the masonry. The top of the spire has been rebuilt, the weather vane refixed, remains of gable crosses replaced by apex stones, parts of coping renewed to gables and much restoration elsewhere.

Internally to the spire numerous stone faces are decaying on face, some bricks to openings in the upper part of the Tower internally are missing.

There are numerous repairs and replacements still required to Stonework and Wall faces including repair and repointing to plinth walls below oversailing plinth stone course, plinth stone course to West Buttresses are broken and a number of buttress top and offset caps are damaged, particularly at the North-West corner. An area of flint facing to the West Gable of the South Aisle, under the coping stone, is missing. There are stone dressings to windows and West Doorway requiring renewal. Much erosion to stonework has occurred to windows and surrounds to Tower and Spire, flat facework to spire is spalling off and the drip mould above the cornice is defective and parts are missing, the cornice mould is defective and broken and parts are missing. The Boiler Flue has an area of collapsed rubble facing to the lower part and the slate oversailing course is very worn and decayed. The Porch Finial Cross is missing and the Arch to the outer door and jambs are shaling badly.

NOTE:- The North West Buttress to the Tower has a fracture running through the buttress from North to South, several stones are fractured, the buttress requires rebuilding from the bottom offset to the plinth up to the first higher level offset.

A number of bushes and a flowering Cherry tree are growing in the angle formed by the West Wall of the South Porch and the West End of the South Aisle Wall, these should be removed.

All Ivy growth should be removed from all walls especially the Boiler House where it is causing damage to wall facework.

ROOFS AND GUTTERS:

The roofs to Chancel, Nave and Aisles are all timber framed with trusses of braced collar beam type, the curved braces of trusses forming two central arches springing from stone corbels. All timber framing and boarding to the roof slopes are exposed and appear to be in good condition, some damp stains are evident to the horizontal boarding to the North side of the Nave second bay from the East End.

All roof slopes are covered with plain tiles generally in good condition, the North Aisle roof was relaid in 1981, a few ridge tiles are broken and there are a number of loose, broken or missing tiles to roof slopes generally.

The South Porch roof is timber framed which shows some signs of woodworm infestation of old standing, with some signs of activity, in particular to the plate on the West side.

ROOFS AND GUTTERS
CONT. ED:

Lead lined valley gutters are constructed between both aisles and the Nave, there are numerous old lead burnt and mastic patch repairs. The Gable End lead flashings to roof slopes have numerous cracks needing repair.

The vegetation on the tiled roof of the Boiler House and Chancel North slope should be treated with weed killer and be removed when dead and the broken tiles to eaves of the Boiler House be repaired and replaced.

RAINWATER
DISPOSAL:

Rainwater is disposed of by piped soakaways from the bases of the rainwater pipes. The lower sections of many rainwater pipes are buried in the walling of the projecting plinth, making any repair or clearing extremely difficult. The fitting of offsets to these down pipes with open ends discharging over gulleys would be a worthwhile undertaking in the future. The plinth has been cut away in places to expose the bases of some pipes.

The lead gutter outlets from valley gutters to the cast iron rainwater heads are lead pipes passing through the gable walls, these are all suspect, that to the East End of the valley between the Nave and South Aisle was recently repaired, I am informed, after a fault developed causing water to penetrate into the walls below, the North-East corner in the South Aisle Chapel. The pipes to the gutters over the West end of the Nave-South Aisle and that to the East end of the Nave-North Aisle may well be cracked within the wall and are causing the piers and walls beneath to be saturated as is the pier and wall in the South Chapel. Ideally all should be reformed with proper parapet outlets without pipes.

The valley gutters should be cleared of silt periodically and the vegetation removed from the cistern heads, the head at the East end of the North Aisle is full and overgrowing at the moment and should be cleared.

INTERNAL
DECORATIONS:

Internal decorations to the plastered wall surfaces are generally worn and discoloured and flaking off in many places, all is in need of redecorating. Flaking also occurs on the arcading at the West end of the Nave, and the West end walls, South sides. Wall plaster beneath some windows is discoloured by condensation.

The Boiler House internally, to both ceiling and walls, has a number of small defects and the surfaces are all black with soot, all needs cleaning, repair and redecorating.

FLOORS:

The Chancel is paved with patterned glazed tiles and the steps formed in Portland stone, some tiles are hair cracked.

The aisles and Nave pavings are 150mm x 150mm quarry tiles except to the area around the font at the end of the South Aisle which is paved with white bricks and the East end of the Nave which has a part boarded floor under the Priests stalls and pews.

Raised boarded platforms are constructed to receive the fixed seating to aisles and Nave, some nosings are worn.

The flooring beneath the seating at the West end of the Nave is affected by woodworm.

FLOORS
CON. WED:

The South Porch is floored with two-coloured quarry tiles similar to those in the Nave, these are worn.

Most areas of tiles are damp due to lack of a horizontal damp proof course beneath.

Note:- To the Aisles and at the back of Pews at the West End the former ducts from a previous heating system have been filled with concrete with a screed finish.

The Boiler House Platform and floor is of concrete, oil stained but in a reasonably sound condition.

SUNDRY REPAIRS:

The joints between the boarding of the West door have opened up and some boards have cracked, it is suggested that the doors be repaired and made waterproof and they be lined on the inside. The doors should be treated externally with wood preservative.

The outer doors, frame and fanlight frame to the South Porch should all be cleaned down and oiled with Boiled and Linseed Oil.

The Boiler House door has bottom boarding and rail decayed, these should be repaired and the door Ironmongery be painted and the door be cleaned down and treated with wood preservative.

The Boiler chimney stack band and stays should be cleaned and painted.

GLAZING:

Chancel, East End:

A three light, traceried window with memorial leaded light glazing to the memory of Clara Isabella Sandford Luard dated 1907 - subject "The Adoration".

Chancel, South Side:

Westernmost two light traceried window leaded light memorial to Basil Harrison, 1889 - subject "The Virgin Mary" and "The Light of the World", the cill plaster is crumbling.

Easternmost and South there are also two other similar windows but glazed with plain leaded lights, 8 pieces of glass are cracked or broken.

Chancel, North Side:

One similar two light window glazed with plain leaded lights, four panes cracked.

South Aisle, South Side:

A two light window memorial to Charlotte Douglas Hanson, 1883.

Three other similar two light windows glazed with plain leaded lights - ten panes cracked and one broken.

South Aisle, East End:

A three light traceried headed window, two panes cracked.

GLAZING:
CONTI 3:

South Aisle, West End:

A three light traceried headed window, one light broken and temporarily covered, one light lead broken by mullion and four panes cracked.

North Aisle, East End:

A three light traceried headed window, 1 pane broken and 1 cracked.

North Aisle, North Side:

Four two light tracery headed windows, one glazed with memorial leaded light glazing to Georgiana Frances Freeland and three glazed with plain leaded lights, one broken and temporarily covered and in total some 16 panes cracked or broken.

Vestry, North Side:

A single light with plain leaded light glazing, leadwork and glazing broken.

Vestry, West Side:

A single two light traceried headed window with plain leaded light glazing the top traceried glazing is buckled.

Nave, West End:

A four light traceried window, glazed with diaper pattern leaded light coloured glazing.

Boiler House (Old Vestry):

East Window - Part of leaded light removed from traceried head to provide vent, the window glazing is broken and requires renewing.

Tower:

The small single light windows to higher level to the Spire which are not accessible for close inspection appear to be in reasonable repair.

The windows to the Bell Chamber are filled with timber louvres which have a back frame covered with wire netting, the netting is in good condition but should be extended down to the internal cill line to prevent birds gaining entry. The timbers should be regularly treated with a preservative.

Windows Generally: In order to prevent damage to plaster to walls beneath windows by condensation consideration should be given to forming condensation channels.

FITTINGS:

The Church is without monuments but has been fitted with a fine Oak pulpit, lectern and altar and rails to the Chancel and South Aisle Chapel and Oak Choir Stalls. The font is of no importance. The Organ is a single manual instrument situated at the East End of the North Aisle, built in 1864 by G.M. Holdich of 12, Euston Road, Kings Cross, London, later fitted with electric blower by F. Norden of Ipswich. This instrument was restored by Mander of London in 1965. Some signs of woodworm infestation is evident in the back casing.

FITT. 3
CONTINUED:

The Pews to the Church are of pine, stained and varnished, there is evidence of old woodworm infestation in places but it does not appear to be active at the moment.

BELLS, CLOCK ETC:

The clock floor and bell chamber are accessible by a vertical iron cat ladder to a trap door in the floor of the first stage in the Tower on which the clock movement is housed. The clock consists of an encased pendulum movement with a dial on the West face of the Tower. The dial has an iron frame and numerals with a stone backing. The clock was installed by Gillett and Johnston of Croydon (1897). One weight is exposed and one is cased in, the North Side of the case door is damaged and the clock case is infested with woodworm.

Access to the Bell Chamber is approached by an open stayed and rung ladder through a trap door on the second staging of the Tower, 1 rung is badly eaten away by woodworm which is active, this should be repaired and treated.

The bell frame is of hardwood construction supporting one bell inscribed THO-GARDINER-SUDBURY-FECIT. The bell frame is affected by old woodworm infestation but is structurally stable, in need of cleaning and treatment and the frame and floor areas below and around should be cleared of bird droppings and the floor be treated with a wood preservative.

BOUNDARY FENCE:
AND GATES:

The entrance to the West end are double hung, Oak framed gates on posts, with a fenced pass opening on the South side, the gates require overhaul, repair and lifting. The remainder of the boundary on the West side consists of a holly hedge. The gates should be treated with wood preservative and the Ironmongery painted.

The boundaries enclosing the Churchyard on the North, East and South sides consist of concrete posts with four lines of wire, together with projecting angle iron brackets fixed to the posts and having one strand of barbed wire, all much overgrown by grass and adjacent hedges and rusty.

There is a stand pipe and tap by the West end of the South Boundary.

There is a single Oak framed and braced gate in the North boundary, a similar gate and one opening for a gate in the South boundary with one post missing and a field gate and posts in the East boundary, this is badly warped and dropped.

FOOTPATHS AND
CHURCHYARD:

The paths to the West End are of Tarmac, partly overgrown with grass which should be removed and the tarmac be patched. The path from the gates to the South Porch is of similar material in a fair state of repair.

The Churchyard is tidy with the grass generally well cut to the Western half, the Eastern (rear) portion is in need of cutting. Hedges in general are well grown and in part a trifle overgrown.

INSTALLATIONS:

Heating:

The Boiler is a 'BRITANNIA' No.36.K. Ideal Sectional Boiler adapted for oil firing with fuel injector, pumps and clock controls. The Internal Control Thermostat is on the North wall in the Chancel.

The circulating pipes and radiators are fitted as follows:-

<u>Chancel:</u>	One 28 Section, 5 Column, Classic Pattern Radiator.	
<u>South Chapel:</u>	One 25 Section, 4 Column,	DITTO.
<u>North Aisle (East End):</u>	One 15 Section, 5 Column,	DITTO.
<u>Front of Pews:</u>	Two 30 Section, 5 Column, (Nave) One 30 Section, 4 Column, (S. Aisle)	DITTO. DITTO.
<u>Back of Pews:</u>	Two 30 Section, 5 Column,	DITTO.
<u>Vestry:</u>	One 6 Section, 4 Column,	DITTO.
<u>West End (South Wall):</u>	One 30 Section, 4 Column,	DITTO.

Some valves to radiators will not turn, all should be checked and overhauled.

This system is fed by galvanised Expansion tank sited at high level beneath the floor of the Clock Chamber in the Tower with an overflow extended through the North Wall, pipes and brackets are rusty.

The Oil storage tank is sited on the concrete paving of the old coke fuel bunker alongside the boiler house and is elevated on block piers, all surrounded by a concrete block bund wall.
The top of the oil tank needs painting.

Lighting:

The Electrical installation is served by a mains 240 volt-3 phase - 50 cycles overhead cable to the North side of the Tower and from thence to main switches and meters on distribution boards at West end of the Nave, a 12 gang switch plate is adjacent.

From this position wired circulations are extended to the following points:-

Chancel: 2 Flood reflectors in Sanctuary (Not working).
3 Twin Flood reflectors.
1 6 gang switch plate.

Nave: Three triple flood reflectors.
One four light cluster of flood reflectors.
One double flood reflector.
(All in roof trusses, South Side).
1 Single flood light over Lectern.
One plug socket by Pulpit.
One plug socket on plinth to centre Aisle.
Organ light to manual and control switch to blower unit.
One light under organ manual.

INSTALLATIONS
CONTINUED:

- South Aisle: Four double flood reflectors.
Two single flood reflectors.
- North Aisle: Four double flood reflectors.
- Pulpit: One strip desk light.
- Organ Recess: One batten holder.
One plug socket.
- Choir Vestry: One flood reflector to West side of arch to Nave.
- Priest's Vestry: One wall type batten holder.
- South Porch: Bracket type wall fitting in Archway.
- West Door: All as for South Porch.
- Boiler House: Boiler time switch and pump controls, switch and light trailing batten holder.
- Clock Floor: 1 - Light Batten Holder, switch in Vestry.

Note:-

There is some redundant electrical conduit at the back of the Chancel arch which should be removed.

Lightning Conductor:

The copper tape conductor from the weather cock on the top of the spire down to ground level on the North side of the Tower, is secured by clips and 4 are missing at high level, and extended below ground level, presumably to a copper earth plate or rod, (this should be regularly tested).

GENERAL COMMENT:

The Church is kept generally in a clean condition, the services to the Church and Churchyard are generally in a good condition.

A Log book is kept and was produced at the time of the Inspection. The P.C.C. are well informed on maintenance recommendations and procedure.

WORKS OF REPAIR IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

- (a) General stonework repairs, work to N.W. Buttress, Roof gutter outlet repair and works to Roofs including leadwork to gutters and flashings.
- (b) Reinstate rubble wall to West Gable, South Aisle.
- (c) Works to all timber treatment and repairs.
- (d) Repairs to leaded lights to windows and insertion of condensation channels. Work to Tower netting to openings.
- (e) Repairs to West Door.
Wood preservative to external doors.
- (f) Internal Decorations and All other minor repairs Internal and External.

NOTE:

The Parochial Church Council is reminded that this Report is in no way a Specification of Works, and that when it is decided to put in hand any of the work recommended the procedure authorised by the Chancellor of the Diocese should be followed. A detailed Specification, prepared by the Architect, should be submitted to the Diocesan Advisory Committee for consideration and, if approved, recommendation to the Chancellor for the issue of either a Faculty or an Archdeacon's Certificate, one of which must be obtained before the work can proceed.

Signed: .. *R. A. W. Orrin.* ..
R.A.W. ORRIN.

OCTOBER 1983.