

The Collegiate Church of St Peter in Wolverhampton



The Collegiate Church of Saint Peter stands at the highest point of Wolverhampton, on a site hallowed by the prayers of Christian people for over one thousand years. It is a living monument to Wolverhampton's long history, and it is a place where people come for special services, for joyful and solemn civic occasions, for concerts and recitals, for quiet in the middle of their busy lives as well as week by week to express their commitment to Christ and His Gospel.

The first church to be built on this site was the monastery of St Mary, which Lady Wulfrun rebuilt in 994. Her statue stands in the square outside. She endowed it with vast lands in Wolverhampton, Bilston, Willenhall, Wednesfield and Pelsall. She made it a Collegiate church and placed it in the care of a dean and seven prebendaries. Work on the present building started in 1425, and, of the earlier building, only the lower part on the outside walls, the base of the tower and the lower half of the porch remain. The church you see today is much as the mediaeval builders left it at the beginning of the 16th century, with the exception of the chancel which was completely rebuilt in 1867.

In 1479 King Edward IV united the Deanery of Wolverhampton with the Deanery of Windsor where he had recently built the chapel of St. George and he had appointed Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury, as the first Dean of Windsor and Wolverhampton. Other Deans include: Samson (chaplain to William the Conqueror and compiler of the Domesday Book); Peter of Blois (secretary to Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine); Christopher Urswick (who appears in Shakespeare's Richard III, Act iv, Scene 5); Cardinal Bainbridge (who was poisoned in Rome); Owen Oglethorpe (who crowned Elizabeth I); and Matthew and Christopher Wren (uncle and father of the architect).

The union between the two survived throughout the Reformation, and Wolverhampton was the only Royal Peculiar in Staffordshire to be restored to that status after the accession of Queen Mary I in 1553. After the death of Dean Hobart in 1846, Parliament abolished the Deanery of Wolverhampton and St Peter's became a Rectory in the Diocese of Lichfield.

The cost of building the church was immense, and so also has been the cost of maintaining it. Please consider making a gift in order that we of this generation can pass on this great architectural treasure in good repair for future generations to enjoy.

We hope that you have enjoyed your visit to St Peter's and that you will want to come again. As you walk back through the church thank God for its witness to his love throughout the centuries and pray for all those who continue that witness today.



The Seal of *Theodosius de Camilla*
Dean of Wolverhampton 1288-94

1. The Font.

The font was carved in about 1480. Two of its panels recall the church's union with Windsor. One shows St. Anthony (patron Saint of Windsor) and another shows King Edward IV (who united the Deaneries of Wolverhampton and Windsor)

2. The South West Door.

The South West Door was dedicated in 1932 to the memory of Sir Charles Tertius Mander, first Baronet.

3. The Stone Pulpit

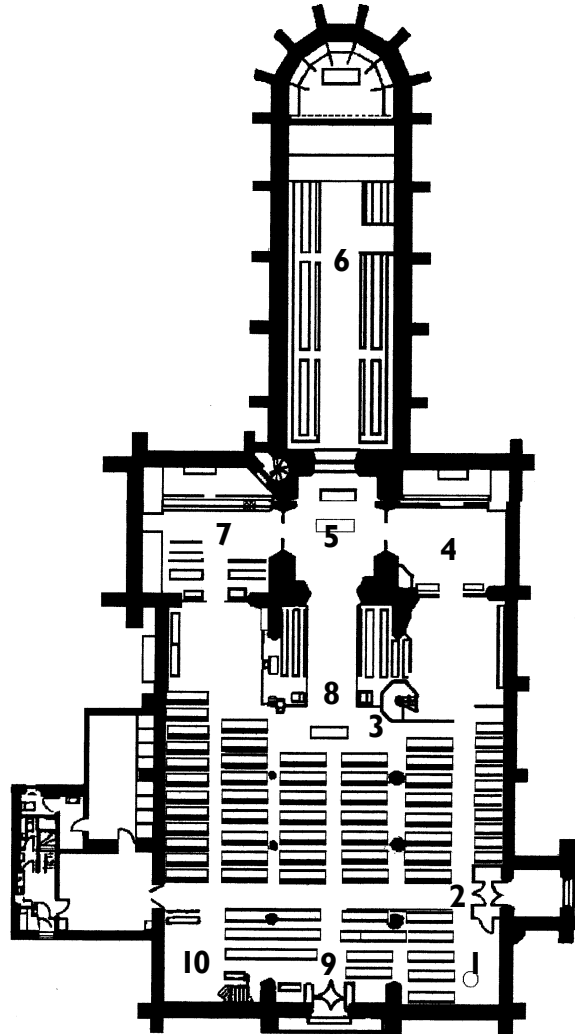
The stone pulpit was given in about 1450 by Humprey Swinerton of Hilton, whose coat of arms decorates the balustrade of the staircase.

4. The Lady Chapel

Historically this chapel is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The stone work of the east window is early fourteenth century. The stained glass was given in 1919 as a memorial to those who died in the First World War. The bronze statue is to the memory of Sir Richard Leveson who led the small English fleet in its attack on the Spanish Armada in 1558. The Jacobean altar is probably the one consecrated at the time of Archbishop Laud's visit to Wolverhampton in 1635.

5. The Tower.

This is the site of the ancient Jesus altar, a prominent feature of most Collegiate churches in the Middle Ages. The tower arches, above, are the oldest part of the present building.



6. The Chancel.

The Chancel is modern and was completed in 1867. It stands on the site of two previous chancels, the first being mediaeval and known as the "Dean's Chancel" was left in ruins following Cromwell's Commonwealth. The second was built in 1682 by Dean Turner but was out of keeping with the rest of the church.

7. The Memorial Chapel.

Once known as the chapel of St Catherine and St Nicholas, it was restored in 1948 in memory of those who lost their lives in the Second World War. The large monument on the North wall is to the memory of Colonel John Lane who helped King Charles II escape after his defeat by Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester in 1651.

8. The Nave

It is very spacious with fine clerestory windows near the roof. The ceiling was restored and painted in 1970.

9. The Gallery

Built in 1610 by the Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors for the use of the boys Free School (now Wolverhampton Grammar School). Formerly there were galleries on all sides of the nave.

10. The Bookshop

Books, cards, gifts and recordings of our choirs are available here.