



A Chronology 1086–2015

- 1086** Manor of Caversham acquired by Sir Walter Gifford, a Domesday Survey Commissioner
- 1100** Earliest part of church (NW angle – original window remaining on W side of Flower Room) built – originally just small nave and chancel.
- 1162** Gifford's grandson donates St Peter's Church to Notley Priory (near Thame). St Peter's maintained by monks who live in village of Caversham.
- c1180** N aisle built, and nave enlarged. Original Norman archway, subsequently restored, remains as main entrance (S. door).
- 1231** First record of Caversham Bridge – brick arches on Caversham side, and wooden drawbridge on Reading side.
- c1280** Stone tower built, and chancel extended. The house (later known as the Rectory, then the Old Rectory and finally Caversham Court) built as residence for monks – soon leased to first Lay Rector who had to provide 'a sufficient, able priest' to serve St Peter's Church for annual stipend of £40, for whom a half-timbered cottage was provided.
- c1490** North aisle widened, the original Lady (now Vanderstegen) Chapel built, and arcade, with Angel capitals, installed between chancel and new chapel.
- 1538** St Peter's Church (except Lady Chapel), Caversham Court, and other land in Caversham, which had all been owned by Notley Priory, all given to Christ Church, Oxford. Lady Chapel given to Anthony Brigham (cofferer to Henry VIII), and subsequently inherited through female line by Vanderstegen family, when it was renamed the Vanderstegen Chapel. Dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in progress.
- 1542** Founding of the Oxford Diocese.
- 1549** Publication of the first Book of Common Prayer.
- 1597** Earliest existing Caversham parish register.
- 1600** First of existing church bells installed.
- 1605** Balcony installed at back of church – dated panel from it is on display on left hand side of door into kitchen, and another decorated panel above doorway.
- 1637** Second of existing bells installed.
- 1643** Royalist defences round church, guarding approach to Caversham Bridge, attacked –

battering with cannon destroys tower and N side of church.
Civil War in progress – Reading under siege by Parliamentary army, under Earl of Essex, 15-25 April.

- 1663** By now, the lost upper part of tower rebuilt in wood (on remaining stone base of old one), capped by dated weather vane now displayed in chancel. The north side of church was restored. The side window in the Vanderstegen Chapel is plainer than those in the rest of the north aisle, and is therefore probably later (could it have been made or remade as part of these repairs?).
- 1719** Date of the earliest readable gravestone in the churchyard (of John Salter).
- 1743** Chandelier, now in Vanderstegen Chapel, given by Simon Walcroft, former parish clerk.
- 1758** Incumbent, Peter Vatas (Senior), Perpetual Curate (equivalent to Vicar), receives annual income of £43-10s-0d (£43.50), including £1-10s-0d 'surplice fees', including those for 'churchings of women'. Applies to Church Commissioners for 'augmentation of my curacy' - a pay rise.
- 1760** House and garden bought as Glebe House for St Peter's incumbents on the west side of Buckside, near the river (demolished in 1866).
- 1763** Third of existing bells installed.
- 1787** Extensive repairs to tower, costing £141-13s-1½d, including cost of beer for the workmen.
- 1799** The Rectory (Caversham Court) sold by Christ Church, Oxford, to William Blackall Simonds, who becomes the Lay Rector.
- 1802** Fourth and fifth of existing bells installed.
- 1809** Benjamin Pope installed in 'living' as Vicar.
- 1817** Benjamin Pope applies to Church Commissioners for increase in stipend because of increase in population of parish.
- 1821** Ringers receive 'customary allowance' of beer on four designated days during the year, at annual cost of £1-8s-0d.
- 1826** Sixth of existing bells installed.
- 1829** Parish accounts include £1-7s-0d for 6 bottles of old port (cost includes hamper and bottles).
- 1832** As well as his office in Caversham, is now Vicar of Nether Stowey, Somerset, and Osborne St George, Wiltshire, and also a Minor Canon of Windsor. He employs a Curate to officiate in Caversham (living in the Glebe House (in dilapidated condition) while he himself lives for part of the year in his Somerset vicarage, and the rest in Windsor.
- 1834** Parliamentary Commission on the Established Church leads to Act imposing restrictions on holding more than one 'living'.
- 1837** Glebe House is dilapidated and often floods, and Pope proposes to Church Commissioners that a new one should

be built 'in some more advantageous situation'.

- 1842** Pope makes further appeal for a new Glebe House. 7 acres of King's Meadow given by Christ Church, Oxford, to parish to augment income of incumbent.
- 1843** Joshua Bennett installed as incumbent (the term 'Vicar' replaced 'Perpetual Curate' in the 1860s).
- 1843** Since the Glebe House was now 'quite unfit for residence', a new Vicarage (now the Rectory) is built, at a cost of £1,200 (now £106,600). Bennett probably defers move from his previous living in Tetbury, Gloucestershire, until it has been completed.
- 1847** Extensive repairs, costing £400 (£29,013 today). William Crawshaw proposed at Vestry meeting that 'it is desirable to afford better accommodation for the inhabitants [of] the Parish for attending divine worship in the Parish Church'.
- 1848** Stained glass window (Stephens memorial) installed in East window of chancel (now in present Lady Chapel).
- William Crawshaw (1788-1867), wealthy iron master from Merthyr Tydfil, having leased Caversham Park 'for many years', buys it.
- 1853** First organ installed, at cost of £121-16s-6d.
- 1856** Tower 'in a very dilapidated state' - Bennett applies for grant to rebuild it, enlarge church, and build new porch to replace the 'modern brick and plastered one' then in place (built by 1794). There is a need to increase accommodation 'as soon as possible to meet the pressing wants of the population which is fast increasing and many of whom are compelled to resort to other places of worship for want of accommodation in their own Parish Church. The present sittings also for the poor people are of a most wretched description'. Receives only enough to increase and improve seating. At this time, local population is 'almost entirely agricultural'. William Crawshaw advocates restoration of church.
- 1857** Old box pews removed and replaced by present pine ones. Pulpit installed. First part (east end) of vestry built, for which Mr Vanderstegen, to safeguard the structure of his chapel, insists on his own nominated architect (different from the one supervising the main work). He requires provision of additional buttresses as a precaution. Total cost £577-10s-0d (£43,483 today).
- 1867** Repairs to church roof.
- 1869** Lay Rector sells rights to Tithes income which are transferred to the benefice. Lay Rector retains ownership of chancel (and his seats there), although incumbent responsible for repairs.
- 1868** New Caversham Bridge, made of iron.
- 1878** State of the tower, having 'long been

a reproach to the inhabitants', now deteriorated to the extent that church considered unsafe. Once work underway, it becomes clear that deterioration is far more extensive than had been realised. Also church now has insufficient capacity to meet large and continuing increase in population. Many of these are affluent, and it is now possible to raise the cost of the full restoration required.

- 1878** Rebuilding begins of much of church, including tower, and addition of south aisle, incorporating the stained glass windows there, and a new organ. The old gallery was removed, and the bells re-hung. Total cost £4,443-4s-8d (£373,706 now), of which the organ cost £525 (equivalent now to £44,156).
- 1882** Joshua Bennett retired - succeeded as Vicar by Arthur Ellison Molyneux. Severe flooding in Lower Caversham.
- 1883** Vestry extended to the west, to its present size.
- 1884** First street lighting in Caversham (64 gas lamps).
- 1885** Churchyard closed.
- 1891** Last two bells installed – one donated by Joshua Bennett (former Vicar). Bell frame strengthened and repaired.
- 1893** Charles William Henry Kenrick installed as Vicar
- 1894** Approach to Mr Vanderstegen about the rent paid for his chapel. Joshua Bennett died – a muffled peal on two successive days. Litany desk (lectern) donated.
- 1896** Restoration of decorative work in chancel. Transfer of secular responsibilities of Vestry to newly-formed Caversham Urban District Council.
- 1898** Installation of stained glass in E window of Vanderstegen Chapel, in memory of Mr HJ Simonds. Levelling of grave mounds, and laying flat of loose gravestones, by newly formed Caversham Urban District Council, now responsible for maintaining it. Charles William Euseby Cleaver installed as Vicar.
- 1901** Processional cross given.
- 1902-9** Protracted discussion about need to increase church capacity, and whether this should be achieved by further enlarging St Peter's, but in due course it was decided to build another church (St Andrew's).
- 1902** Ping-pong festival to raise money for new parish (Baltimore) hall.
- 1903** Baltimore Hall opened.
- 1905-7** Improvements to ventilation and lighting (including incandescent gas mantles).
- 1907** Organ removed from Vanderstegen Chapel for repair. Opportunity taken to remove ceiling then in place to reveal medieval wooden roof structure, which is also repaired, both for aesthetic reasons and also to improve acoustics. Mr Vanderstegen agrees, provided he doesn't

have to pay for the work.
Umbrella holders installed.

- 1908** H Caversham Simonds, Lay Rector, moves from Caversham Court to Three Mile Cross, and gives permission for the choir to use his seats in the chancel, while retaining the right to withdraw it.
- 1908-9** Adjustments to improve choir stalls.
- 1910** Chancel roof repaired.
Discussion about the urgent need to provide 'adequate lavatory accommodation in close proximity to St Peter's'.
- 1914** Installation of new gas apparatus 'to address concerns over poor heating'.
- 1915** Ralph Sadleir Stoney installed as Vicar
- 1916** Rectorship bought for parish by benefactor – Vicar becomes the Rector, and Vicarage renamed as Rectory. Ownership of chancel transferred to Parish.
- 1917** Rector advises that it is not necessary to kneel for the epistle at a Communion service.
- 1918** Installation of screen between chancel and Vanderstegen Chapel – as memorial to Donovan Carter.
Electric lighting installed at St Peter's (but not until 1934 at St Andrew's, and 1949 at St John's!).
- 1919** Rectory on the telephone.
- 1920** National Assembly of the Church of England (Powers) Act, known as the "Enabling Act", passed. The aim of this was to develop self-government in the C of E, and it established Church Councils (PCCs) as statutory bodies.
- 1921** Haslam and Church Lads Brigade memorial window in north aisle.
- 1923** Dr William Wingfield Longford installed as Rector. Electricity supply installed in Rectory.
- 1924-5** Extension of chancel, and of the south aisle to form the present Lady Chapel as a war memorial. New screen between chancel and new Lady chapel, matching the one on north side of chancel. East window of chancel moved to become east window of new Lady chapel, and new east window to chancel installed with new stained glass. The Norman font, found some years before buried in the garden of the Old Rectory (Caversham Court) is reinstated on a new base.
- 1924-6** Construction of new Caversham Bridge in reinforced concrete.
- 1928** Installation of new heating system.
Tribute made to 'the kindness of Messrs Barclays Bank in allowing our Church Account to be so constantly overdrawn'.
- 1928** Part of Rectory Garden sold to Reading Borough Council to allow road to be widened.
- 1931** New hymn book, 'Songs of Praise', introduced.
- 1932** Arrangements made for regular provision

of flowers on the altar.
William Francis Wood installed as Rector.

- 1935** Lightning conductors installed for the first time.
- 1936-7** Fund set up for extensive repairs needed to organ.
- 1941** First church parade at St Peter's of the Home Guard.
- 1942** On Sunday 5th July, the day after American Independence Day, the Battle Hymn of the Republic sung at both services.
October: death of the Rector, William Francis Wood.
- 1943** Harold Hewitson Nash installed as Rector. He holds several parties in Rectory Garden to meet parishioners.
- 1945** 'For the first time in living memory...the Parish has paid its Quota (£188, equivalent to £5,673 now) in full for 1944...a notable achievement'.
- 1946** New heating system installed.
- 1947** Church to be locked when unoccupied because of thefts.
Severe flooding of low lying areas.
- 1948-9** Appeal for further organ repairs (carried out in 1949).
- 1955** Repair of leaking roof.
- 1956** Dunning repairs to floor of N aisle, an eighteenth century vault is found containing the bodies of three women, all apparently from the same family.
- 1957** St Peter's listed as a Building of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.
- 1958** Front pew in front of pulpit, and first two rows on other side of aisle, removed to allow more 'passage' space.
- 1961** New silver processional cross donated ('a simple and beautiful design') in memory of Leonard Charles Samways.
- 1962** John Grimwade installed as Rector.
- 1963** Changes Parish Communion to allow more congregational participation, including a layman reading the epistle.
- 1973** Bells re-hung.
- 1974** Kitchen and loos installed, and more pews removed.
Last meeting of Caversham Vestry Committee.
- 1983** Richard Kingsbury installed as Rector.
- 1984** Balmore Hall sold and demolished to make space for Balmore Park Surgery.
- 1987** Pipe organ removed from Vanderstegen Chapel, and replaced with electronic one.
- 1991** Refurbishment of Vanderstegen Chapel completed, including new screen, to match others, separating it from north aisle – also glazing to this, and the other screens on each side of chancel.
- 2008** Dan Tyndall installed as Rector
- 2014** Mike Smith installed as Rector