

Around St Peter's Church in a few minutes

Standing under the tower of the church and looking towards the far end, you face East. The **Nave**, which is the main body of the church, is immediately in front and leads up to the **Chancel**; and the **North** and **South aisles** are to the left and right respectively.

As you move round the church, you will see semi-circular arches and pointed arches, narrow pointed windows, known as lancets, and others of varying size and design. The differences are due to the dates at which the building was erected and extended and tell in stone the history of the church.

The four main styles of English architecture are:

Norman, with massive pillars and rounded arches;

Early English, with pointed arches, sometimes supported by grouped columns, and lancet windows;

Decorated, having flowing tracery in the stonework of the windows;

Perpendicular, having flattened arches with the free use of vertical bars in the windows.

Very roughly the periods covered by the above styles are:



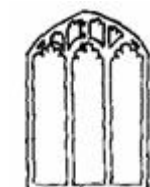
Norman: eleventh and twelfth century



Early English: thirteenth century



Decorated: fourteenth century



Perpendicular: fifteenth and sixteenth century

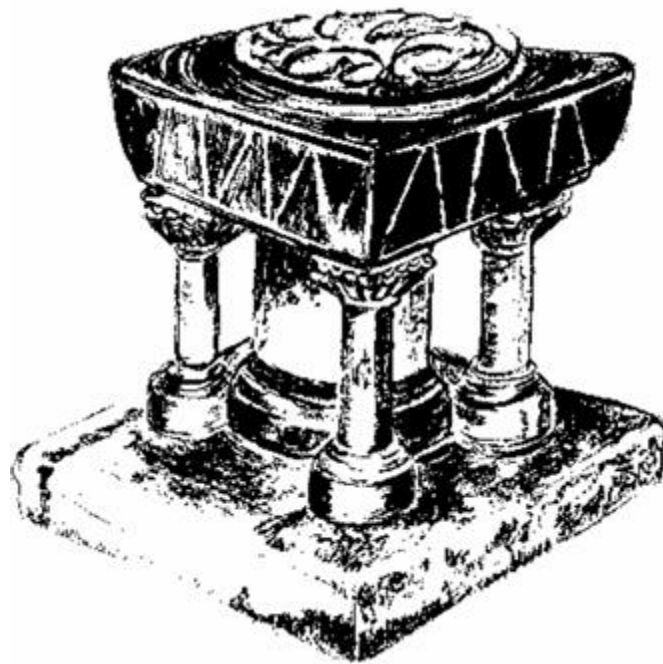
The framed sketches by the font show the possible appearance of the church at the different stages of its history.

The first mention of Iver was in the Chronicle of Aethelweard in 893 and by the time the Domesday Book was compiled in 1086 Iver was a large prosperous village with three mills, four fisheries producing 1,500 fish and eels for Fridays, woodland to feed 800 swine and a vineyard. The population was probably more than 200.

The Font

On the left under the tower is the Norman font, hewn from a block of Purbeck marble and roughly decorated with zigzag patterns. The base and four shafts are of the same stone but the carved tops and bases of the shafts are in freestone and are modern. Iver people have been baptised using this font for 800 years, although until about 1890 the font stood under the nearest Norman arch on the left-hand side of the church.

On the wall just above the Font is a brass tablet in memory of the 64 men of Iver killed in the 1914—1918 war. Below it is a panel, discovered in the boiler room, from a dismantled chest tomb.



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The Nave

On your left two bold Norman arches, supported by half-columns, cut through the older wall. The capitals are decorated with adze-cut flutings. You will see that the further arch cuts through a blocked up pre-existing window. This was discovered during the restoration of the church in 1848 and is of Saxon work, its probable date being late eleventh century. The arch of this window is of white freestone with a roll moulding.



The inner face of the stonework (i.e. that facing the nave) is reddened by fire, and fragments of charred timber were found near it during the restoration. The window opening would have been much narrower than the stone frame and there would have been no glass in it, as glass was very expensive and hard to obtain. From the North aisle near the organ, you can see the other side of this window which, interestingly, is not reddened.

In contrast to the Norman arches on the left, those on the right, cut when the South aisle was constructed in the thirteenth century, are pointed. The church would have been quite dark inside with only very small windows. The walls were painted with Bible story pictures in bright colours. The floor would have been of earth, usually covered with rushes, and there would have been no seating until the 15th century, when a few benches were placed against the walls, where the old or infirm could sit.



When the nave walls were raised in the fifteenth century, windows (known as clerestory windows) were inserted on both sides. These are in the Perpendicular style. The modern painted shields (1913) on the stone corbels supporting the roof timbers recall the various ecclesiastical jurisdictions, past and present, to which the parish has been subject in the course of its history.

The North side (left hand) shows the current jurisdictions: the realm and Church of England; the Province of Canterbury; the Diocese of Oxford; the county and Archdeaconry of Buckingham; the Parish



England



Canterbury



Oxford



Bucks



St Peters

The South side shows past jurisdictions: St George's, Windsor 1351—1545; the Diocese of Lincoln 1051—1845; Dorchester and Leicester were former divisions of the Lincoln Diocese; Lichfield was the archbishopric of the Kingdom of Mercia, to which Buckinghamshire belonged.



Lichfield



Leicester



Dorchester



Lincoln



**St George's
Windsor**

The pulpit dates from 1717 and was originally a triple-decker. This consisted of the clerk's desk at the bottom, the priest's stall above and then steps up to the pulpit itself, which had a sounding board or tester above it as an early form of sound projection. The clerk's desk was removed in 1844 and the sounding board has recently been found and is to be restored to the church. The carved cherubs, which were fixed to each panel of the pulpit, were stolen except the one on the door.

Since the Reformation in the 16th century, the Bible, in English, has been available in this church, so that people in Iver could find God's truth from it. The brass lectern in the form of an eagle was given in memory of John Edward Taylor in the year 1888.

The North Aisle

The North aisle was added to the Saxon nave during the twelfth century (the probable date was 1170) and one Norman window remains at the West end of this aisle as shown in the picture below.



The Perpendicular windows of the aisle were put in during the fifteenth century and the roof also dates from this period. It is worth looking at the carved corbels, illustrated below, on which the trusses of the curved principal beams rest. On the North side are two grotesque heads facing a cowled and bearded head on the opposite wall.



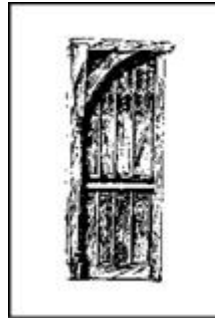
Before the Reformation there was probably a side chapel with an altar at the East end of this aisle, where the organ now stands. You can still see a recess and bracket that were part of it.

The Chancel

The chancel was rebuilt in the thirteenth century (the Early English period), probably replacing a much smaller structure. The chancel arch is of this period but the pillars that support it date from the nineteenth-century restoration. Three lancet windows remain, one partially blocked by the tomb of Lady Salter; the two windows nearest the nave are of later date (fourteenth century or Decorated) the East window is late fifteenth century, but the glass is nineteenth century made by Kempe.

In medieval times the chancel was shut off from the nave by a screen of carved and painted wood, a large part of which stands in a corner of the South aisle. Along the top ran a platform supporting a large crucifix and probably images of saints (very often the Virgin Mary and St John, the

Apostle). This platform was the rood loft, the old English word for the cross being rood, and was sometimes used for the dramatic representation of scriptural scenes or for groups of musicians to play. It was carved by John Wheteley in the mid fifteenth century. There are records of the names of and payments for many of the carpenters who worked with him. The remains of a stone staircase which lead to the rood loft are best seen from the South aisle.



The Sanctuary

This area behind the sanctuary rail now contains the Communion Table, made by John Weatherall between 1774 and 1794. You should especially notice the beautiful arcaded recess containing the sedilia — seats for the officiating clergy — and piscinae, holding water for cleaning the vessels used in the services. These belong to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. This recess had been blocked up and buried under plaster until it was discovered in the nineteenth century. Iver church shares with Salisbury Cathedral and some other churches the distinction of possessing the double piscina. Possibly one basin was used for washing the vessels used in the Mass (a drain carried the ablutions into the churchyard so that no part of the elements should suffer desecration) and the other for washing the priest's hands.



The reredos (the screen behind the Communion Table) was made by Kempe and installed in the late nineteenth century as a gift from the Meeking family of Richings. It shows Christ on the cross and several saints, including the two first British martyrs, St Alban and St Frideswide. Behind it is the earlier painted text of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.

The South Aisle

The South aisle was added at about the same time as the rebuilding of the chancel. A platform for an altar can still be seen in this aisle. There is also a piscina in the South wall and from here the stairs to the Rood loft can be seen.

At the West end of this aisle is a small Early English lancet window (restored). The pointed arches are of this date but the bases and capitals of the columns were replaced at the restoration. The windows of the South wall are fifteenth century, as is the East window of this aisle. This window contains some good modern glass. Note the family's favourite dogs and the view of their farmhouse home.

The corbels again show the thirteenth-century craftsman's delight in the grotesque. On the South wall a workman with hands on knees appears to be watching his opposite number who is obviously singing (or shouting?) to him. A finely carved angel displaying a book looks across to a rather feebly carved nineteenth-century companion.

The South door is of the same period; the woodwork is original. Part of the rood screen (see earlier) is to be seen at the West end of the aisle, and against the West wall are the old fire hooks formerly used to pull down burning cottages or thatch.

The parish chest by the South door held all the records of the church, the baptisms, marriages and deaths registers, churchwardens' papers and workhouse records, and all important village documents. These old records are now kept in Aylesbury. There are three locks – one for the vicar of Iver and one for each churchwarden.

Above the door is a charity board listing parish charities and land holdings dated 1688.

The Tower

The base of the tower may date from the Norman period. It must have been built to about two-thirds of its present height in the thirteenth century; it has windows of this period in its lower stage and the tower arch is of the same date. The West doorway and the window above it (rebuilt in 1898) were constructed in the fifteenth century. The topmost section of the tower was probably added in the early sixteenth century. An iron spiral staircase installed in 1895 leads up to the bell loft.

The tower contains a ring of eight bells and a sanctus bell and the clock. The bells received attention in 1885, when the present nos. 6 and 7 were recast at Whitechapel by Messrs Mears and Stainbank; in 1929 Messrs Gillett and Johnston of Croydon added two treble bells and recast what is now no. 3. The ring of eight bells was rehung in a modern steel frame in 1937. The oldest

bell, the tenor, was cast in 1747. The heavy oak timbers of the old frame, dating from 1621, were used in the construction of the lych-gate as a memorial to Tonman Mosley, first Lord Anslow of Iver.

There is a wonderful view from the top of the tower – on a clear day Uxbridge, Canary Wharf, Heathrow, Windsor Castle and the copper horse in the Great Park can be seen. From time to time Open days are held when visitors can climb the tower and enjoy the view.

The Exterior

The fabric is built almost entirely of flint, but 'pudding-stone' — a conglomerate found in South Buckinghamshire — was partly used in the extension of the church and for repair work. The angles of the walls of the original nave have been made by re-using thin Roman bricks, probably taken from some ruined building in the neighbourhood.

The carvings surrounding the west door are badly eroded but the remains of two shields can be seen. On the left is a representation of the pagan Green Man with an oak leaf over his mouth. Until 1844 porches protected the South and West doors.



There is an Ordnance Survey 'bench mark' near the ground on the wall to the right when facing the door. Moving round to the right, near the end of the South aisle a stone medieval coffin probably later used as a horse trough has been preserved.

The outline of an earlier round arched door may be seen in the tower wall.

The small Priest's door leading into the Chancel on the South side has two heads representing temporal and spiritual power (state and church).