



ST PETER'S CHURCH CAMBRIDGE

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

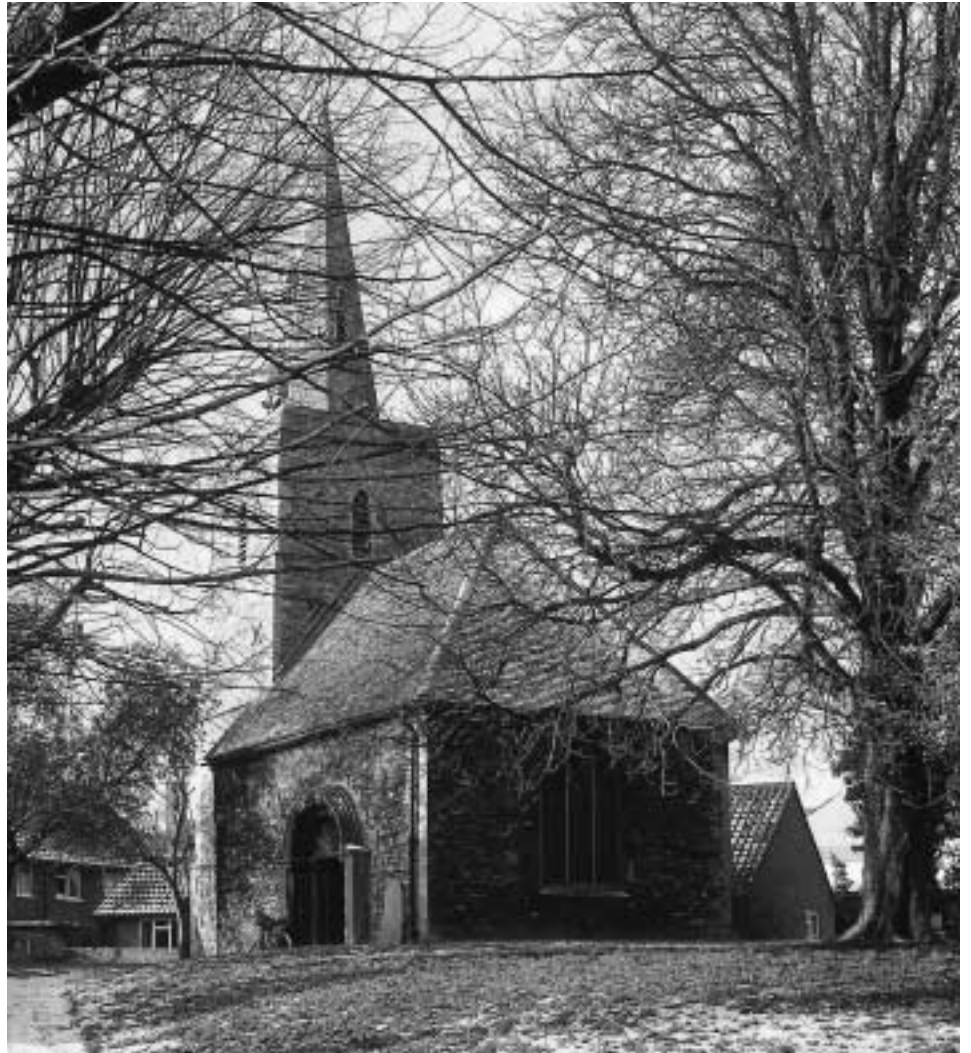
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St Peter's is a tiny, atmospheric church with a chequered history of neglect and rescue. In 1781 it was largely pulled down and rebuilt, a little smaller, incorporating original features and using the same building materials.

The first church was built in the 11th century to the north of the river on one of the main routes into the town. A plain, round-headed, blocked-up doorway and the carved font remain from this period. In the 13th century a more elaborate doorway was added to St Peter's, and by the early 14th century there was also a porch and a low, square tower.

At this time churches were supported by the tithes system, in which a tenth of all produce or money from the parish was given to the church, a quarter going to the upkeep of the fabric, but only of the chancel. The rest was the responsibility of the parishioners. By the 16th century the parish of St Peter's was much less populated, and in 1628 a survey mentioned only 14 families. Despite this a new bell was hung in the tower in 1603, but in general the story was one of lack of money and only intermittent services.

By 1781 the building was in such a bad state that it was pulled down, except for a section close to the tower, and the base of the tower itself. Individual features, like the doorways from the 11th and 13th centuries, and the font and some interior stone inscriptions were saved. From this arose the present church, built to a smaller plan, but using the same materials, and incorporating the rescued features. It was



probably at this time that the spire was added to the tower.

Despite this effort, the church remained underused, and once more started the slide into decay. By the 1950s the church was dilapidated, subsidence was causing problems to the foundations and the churchyard was overgrown. The decline was halted by H S (Jim) Ede, who was renovating nearby Kettle's Yard to use as an art gallery.

Mr Ede became concerned for the church, and his first action was to halt the effect of subsidence by constructing concrete-filled trenches under the floor. From then onwards

he did much to involve others in contributing to the repair and maintenance of St Peter's.

In 1963 the Cambridge Preservation Society raised funds to repair the spire, and in 1973 the roof was re-tiled and shortly afterwards other external repairs were completed. The interior was redecorated in 1999.

In 1971, St Peter's was declared redundant, that is, services were no longer held except on special occasions, like St Peter's Day. It is now cared for by The Churches Conservation Trust.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH

St Peter's has a very simple ground plan, consisting of a rectangle, with a smaller, almost square, space at its western end where the tower stands.

Exterior

St Peter's is constructed mainly of flint rubble set in mortar, with corners and features, like window frames, made from Barnack stone. The Romans once occupied this area and some red Roman tiles have been incorporated with the flint into the walls, - there is an example of this just to the right of the entrance.

South door

This is the only entrance and, like many parish churches, is one of the most decorated parts of the church. It was built in the early 13th century and has the typical rounded arch shape of the Norman period. There are two slender pillars on each side, whose tops or capitals have a design of leaves, and with a simple, and now much eroded, pattern between the columns. One column has been lost and was replaced by a wooden shaft, probably in the 18th century. The arch over the door is heavily but plainly moulded, and the semi-circular space it creates, called the tympanum, is filled with a modern design in wood. The door itself is not original.



Tower

The tower is roughly square and was first built in the 14th century. Stylistically the rounded arch of the Norman period progressed to a more pointed shape, and this can be



The entrance has typically Norman shape and decoration.

Timeline	
1000 - 1100	St Peter's church built. Blocked north door and font top remain from this period.
1200 - 1300	South entrance added.
1300 - 1400	By the early 1300s the church had a chancel and nave, with low west tower and south porch (disappeared). Font base is from this time.
1400 - 1500	Bell frame added (may be earlier).
1500 - 1600	Parish reduces in size.
1603	New bell installed.
1628	Parish consists of only 14 families.
1650	No proper staffing or funding.
1760	Roof fallen in, interior wrecked. Tower precarious.
1770	William Cole, an antiquarian, finds the weathervane from Peterhouse Chapel blown down by a storm and installs it later at St Peter's.
1781	Church pulled down except for west end of nave and base of tower. Rebuilt smaller. Spire added.
1800	Hardly used. But its historical value recognised by antiquarians.
1900	Continues to decline.
1950s	HS Ede undertook repairs by strengthening floor to prevent further subsidence.
1963	Spire repaired through appeal by Cambridge Preservation Society.
1970	Roof repaired.
1971	Not enough people use the church and it is made redundant.
1975	More repairs, especially to the tower.
1984	Redecorated inside.
1973	The Churches Conservation Trust (then known as the Redundant Churches Fund) take over care of the church.

seen in the window openings of the tower. The upper windows are unglazed so that when the bell is rung it can be heard clearly. The tower is built in rising and slightly narrower stages, each marked by a band of stone called a string course. Cross-shaped iron braces have been fitted to keep the wall from buckling (owing to subsidence). These braces are generally fixed by a metal shaft into a parallel wall inside to anchor them. The top of the tower is covered with lead to waterproof it, and there are lead drainage channels projecting far out over the walls. On top of the tower is a six-sided stone spire, probably added when the church was rebuilt in the 18th century.

When the church was rebuilt in the late 18th century the Cambridge antiquarian, the Reverend William Cole bought a weathervane and had it installed at St Peter's. Here is his account:

March 12, 1782. I sent to Mr. Masters, who was repairing the steeple of this church (St. Peter's juxta castrum) and had erected last year a sort of vestry on the scite of the delapidated church, the curious old weathercock or Fane, which in a storm, was blown down at Peterhouse about 12 years ago, and which at my request, was given to me by the college. I was desirous to have it, as it had been erected by Dr. Andrew Perne, the famous weathercock Dean of Ely, who put his initials A.P. on it, which occasioned the wags of that time to say that they stood for A. Protestant, A. Puritan, or A. Papist. This made me desirous to have it, and after being at about a guinea expence in repairing it, I was glad to transfer it from my barn's end, where it has stood at Milton these 12 years to a place more proper for it.

North wall

This contains a blocked-up doorway, almost directly opposite to the main entrance. This is the first, 11th-century entrance, and reflects the simplicity of the original church.



The original Saxon doorway is now blocked up.

East wall

This is mostly taken up by the east window, which is in the Decorated style. This style incorporates patterns (tracery) carved from the stone supports in the window. Above the window is the stone-carved face of a woman. This is not a gargoyle, which has the function of directing water away from the wall, and no-one knows why the head is placed here.

The east window has the letters Alpha and Omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet - the beginning and the end).

Interior

Inside, the church is painted white, including the boarded ceiling. The floor is made from stone flags, and is raised at the altar end to denote a division between the chancel, where the altar is, and the nave, where the congregation worship. The tower is integrated into the main body of the church by a tall pointed arch. There are chairs and benches, but no original furniture, and lighting is by a large modern candelabrum hanging from the ceiling.

Font

The font has an 11th-century, roughly square, top set on a plain 14th-century column base. The top has a circular basin and is carved around the sides with a design of four mermen, whose heads and

bodies are presented at each of the corners. The merman have split fishtails which they hold up to each side in their hands, forming a symmetrical pattern on each side of the font. It is strange imagery to have on a Christian item, the only possible, but tenuous, links being that the fish was an early Christian symbol, and that water creatures might be appropriate on the font whose purpose is to hold water that will symbolically wash away sin.



East window.

Windows

The glass in the windows can be seen more clearly from inside. None of it dates from before 1781. The east window, over the altar, is in three parts, each with a small coloured roundel and the rest made



Looking westwards.

up of clear diamond-shaped panes, containing coloured floral or symmetrical designs. The west window in the tower has mostly clear glass with a coloured band of red edging, and a fleur-de-lys shape at the top.

Inscriptions

There are three inscriptions. Two are in the tower: they date from 1696 and 1750 and commemorate members of the Smith family. Both are in stone with decorative work around the edges; one with a cherub and folds of drapery, and the other with scrolls, fruit and flowers. The third inscription is in the chancel near the south door. This dates from 1990 and is dedicated to Jim Ede. By contrast it is very plain with unadorned script.

Altar

The altar is modern and made of stone. It is very simple and restrained with hardly any decoration.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

The small size and simplicity of St Peter's are an advantage, in that pupils can easily understand its layout and features. It is also safe from traffic hazards as long as pupils remain within the area of the graveyard. A study of the church can involve a range of curriculum areas, and there are opportunities for setting work to encompass different levels of ability. In particular, pupils will discover the importance of listening carefully to instructions and information, and, if you decide to organise the work in groups, they will be led into collaborative work which will involve speaking with a purpose and verbal presentations.

An advantage of using physical evidence is that it helps to level the playing field for pupils who are poor at reading, as, initially at least, they are encouraged to discover as much as possible from close observation and deduction. Record taking often involves writing, but for new or poor writers this can be in note form, as



part of a labelled drawing, which can be used for sentences or longer text later in the classroom.

The churchyard is full of wildlife and, depending on the season of your visit, you may be able to spot a variety of flowers, birds and mammals.

Looking around

Most of your pupils will recognise the building as a church, but they may know very little more than that. Let them find out more for themselves. For Yr 5 and upwards prepare an activity sheet similar to the one below. Take compasses. If your class has not used a ground plan before, you will need to do some work in class beforehand: get them to draw up the outline of their work table, and draw in the shapes of the objects on it. Explain the concept of scale, and progress to drawing up a scaled plan of the classroom and its major contents.

Interpreting the church for others

Ask pupils to think about how they would explain the place to other visitors. They need to:

- think about their audience. They might want to target younger children, another class at school, their parents, foreign visitors, or people with a sight or mobility impairment
- decide what language level and form they should adopt to communicate with their chosen audience. This might be their normal writing or spoken level (for parents and peers); very simple writing or spo-

ken level (for younger people); mostly pictograms (for foreign visitors); or non-writing techniques (for visually impaired people)

- choose six appropriate things they want to draw attention to (or more or less, according to ability). This may be a group decision
- decide on medium: guidebook; designs for interpretation panels; trail; audio tape (can record directly on site, or script can be prepared on site and recorded in school); video tape (more appropriate for KS3 and 4). The written forms will need illustrating with drawings or photographs.

You may want to choose what the whole class will do beforehand, so that you can plan and organise resources, or you can leave the decision up to individuals, but if you do this it may be easier to then put pupils choosing the same activity into groups.

All the types will need an introduction, which can be composed back

Reminders

There are houses very near the church, so shouting is anti-social. Ask pupils to be extra careful with felt tip pens. Please do not take rubbings of the inscriptions: the stone is too fragile in the older inscriptions, and pressure will erode the crispness of the modern one. The church is still consecrated, and so the altar has a special significance, please ask pupils not to lean on it. Do not pull bell rope - it will alarm neighbours!

in school. If pupils are working collaboratively in groups, ensure each member is responsible for reporting about one item each. If the target audience is young people, pupils might want to introduce a cuddly character, or the woman whose face is carved in stone at the east end of the church, or a cherub from the Smith inscriptions, to give the information.

Here are some points to consider when creating the following:

■ **A guidebook.** Do not attempt to totally produce this on site, but ask pupils to make detailed drawings, annotated with the information they want to give, and simple notes. They will need the drawings, or photographs, for illustrations. At school the notes can be written up into sentences, and, together with the drawings, can be fixed into a booklet. The cover should have the best of the drawings, and the pages can be embellished with designs based on decorative details found in the church

■ **Designs for interpretation panels.** These can be done on site: they will need factual information, and are always more interesting with

illustrations, perhaps drawing attention to what to look at, or with enlarged details of ornamentation, pictograms showing how the place was used or how things worked. Interpretation panels give information clearly and briefly - you might want to limit the number of words used. If pictograms rather than writing are used, these need to be kept simple. They are not necessarily an easy option, and should have a clear, uncluttered style. Test them out on the rest of the class - are there any suggestions for improvements?

■ **A Trail.** Again this can be done on site and tested. You may need a large sheet of paper on which individual contributions can be fixed. Each piece of work should have information, a picture, and instructions on how to get to the next location. This last will involve some mathematical language and informal measurements, for example, ten paces, diagonal path, right-angle turn to the left

■ **An audio tape.** Ask pupils to bear in mind that this may be used by someone who does not have good vision, and that they need to paint the scene painted in words for them. This means giving the size

All medieval churches comprised a nave (for the congregation) and a chancel to the east. In medieval times the congregation rarely entered the chancel where the clergy and servers were involved in the celebration of the Mass. The chancel was separated off from the congregation by a chancel arch, which often had a screen with a cross. Almost all medieval churches are orientated eastwards, with the altar at the east end. The priest also faced east. In this way the worshippers faced the rising sun - the symbol of the presence of Christ, the light of the world.

(can be measurements or comparisons - 'taller than a double decker bus') colour, texture, materials it is made from, and function of each thing they describe. They will need to jot down all the words they need, then put them into sentences, and finally time how long it takes them to give their information. You may want to impose a time limit on each contribution. Instructions on how to get to the next location will be needed

■ **Touch pads.** These can be textured panels or a combination of audio tape and panel. Pupils can

Just Looking

Outside church

Use your compass to find which way is North, South, East and West, and mark it in the little boxes.

In which direction do the gravestones face?

Now go inside the church.

Find where each item is, and use these pictures to mark them on your plan.

Altar (Is it in the east, west, north or south part of the church? Use your compass)

Entrance

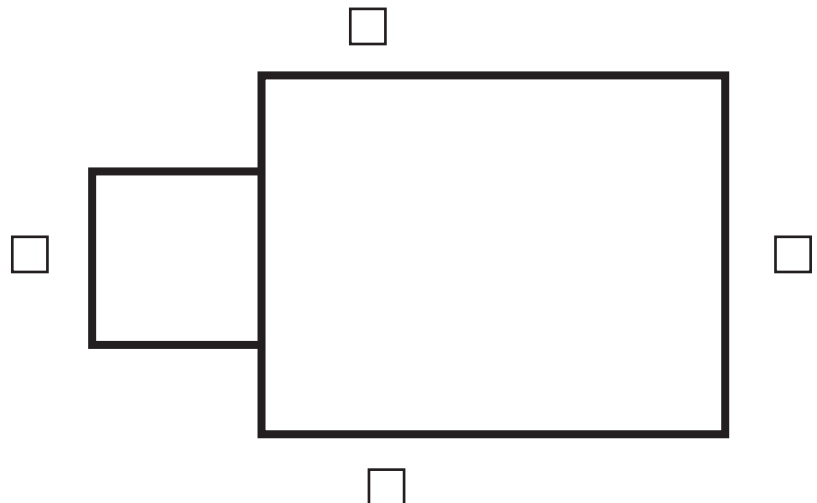
Tower. What were the bells in the tower used for? Why put them in a tower?

Congregation. Mark with an arrow which way they face.

There are 3 inscriptions in church. Where are they? Mark them on your plan.

Font

Use similar questions to the ones above for a question and answer session with younger pupils.



create a large panel which contains the layout of the church in textured materials, with objects, like the altar, seating and inscriptions added in sturdy three-dimensional form (card, clay, stuffed fabric). To this can be added textured panels of the exterior walls, with their windows and doors. The tower might be recreated as a model, as might some of the decorative details, like the stone head on the eastern exterior. If accompanied by an audio panel, this will have the double function of giving information about St Peter's, and describing how to move around the panel. On site pupils will need to take measurements, and make annotated sketches, particularly including notes on textures to refer to in school. This will need to be a collaborative effort, with different groups taking responsibility for each part. Back in school, scale needs to be decided upon, and there needs to be agreement upon how the textures will be reproduced, before making the panels can begin.

Art

It is best to use your visit to St Peter's as an exercise in collecting ideas and sketches which you can work on later in school. Sketchbooks are cheap to make, and it is best to limit drawing materials to pencils, chalk, charcoal and pastels. Plastic carrier bags to hold materials or to sit on are useful. If you prefer to stay outside, it may be simpler to concentrate on one aspect of the building. For example, you can ask pupils to concentrate on lines - thick, thin, straight, curved, fading or broken, and draw the church just using lines. Ask them to choose two examples of different textures, and to make detailed sketches with notes about how these textures feel. Back in class, pupils can experiment with their line drawings, perhaps making one type (curved, straight) dominant, and recreating the image in a different medium, like ink, paints, string pictures, lino prints, or other prints which involve impressing the image into a softer surface. Spaces



Designs in the east window.

can be filled-in with representations of the textured surfaces, either drawn or in a recreated texture (different types of paper - sugar, foil, corrugated card, tissue, or clay, sand, and fabric). If you want to work inside, the individual pane designs in the east window offer lots of interesting shapes. Some are symmetrical, others not. Ask pupils to make detailed copies of two each, but make them big, and add notes on colours. Back in school, they can draw the shapes in the simplest lines, or blocks of colour, that they can. They can use these to make

printing devices, (potato, string, lino) and create their own patterns - for wrapping paper, or borders to a display panel about their visit, or make simple stencils to make a frieze for the classroom. If you want to make your own stained glass window, each pupil can draw their design on acetate (but expensive!) with coloured water soluble pens. For added effect, (and a bit of maths) ask them to find the mid-point of each edge of the acetates, and draw in a thick line to join them to form a diamond lozenge shape, like the original panes at church.

Alternatively, you can make a class quilt. Give out a square of fabric to each pupil, and ask them to draw their simplified shape on it with fabric pen. They can add the extra detail from their sketches in a variety of materials which can be stuck, drawn or sewn on. Ask a parent, or several, to be responsible for machine sewing the squares together. Depending on how you display it, it may also need a sheet to back it and cover the raw edges.

The range of stylistic forms within the church make St Peter's an excellent place for Key Stage 4 students to work. Ask them to concentrate on the 11th-century font, the 18th-



century Smith family inscriptions, and the 20th-century altar and Ede inscription. On site they will need to make sketches and notes of the distinctive features of each style, including the writing, and back in class they can add to their information by researching 11th-century writing styles. Set a task which includes both writing and design in one of the styles, for example, an invitation with an appropriate motif or pattern, a book jacket, or a poster for the church. Alternatively, they can design a new piece for the church in a different style, for example, a 20th-century font, an 18th-century altar or an 11th-century memorial tablet.

Design and Technology

Create a model of the south doorway. The first stage is to record the shape and details by a labelled drawing on site: break down the overall shape into its constituent parts, a rectangle for the door, a semi-circle for the arch, and tubes for the pillars. You may want Key Stage 1 pupils to make individual small doorways: Key Stage 2 pupils might work as a class effort to produce a decorated surround for the classroom door. Back in school, ask them to consider what materials they will use: for small flat models, dowelling can be used for pillars, different thicknesses of string for the moulding, and card for cutting into decorated shapes. For a large-scale model get in a supply of poster tubes, rolled newspaper for moulding, and papier-mâché for detail at the top and between the pillars. Large-scale models will need careful measuring, and solving of problems like how to make a large semi-circle, how to fix the parts together, and how to make it stable when in place.

Redundant churches

Parish churches are such a familiar and beautiful part of our English scene that they seem to be as permanent as the landscape itself. Sadly this is not so. For a number of reasons, such as the mobility of the



Carving on the capitals on the entrance doorway.

population in town and country and decline in church attendance, many of them cannot now be maintained for their original purpose. But every parish church is special. All over England people are raising huge sums of money to keep their churches standing and in good repair, because they value them so much.

When a church has to close for regular worship, the Church of England at a national level becomes very concerned and a complicated legal process is set in motion to decide on its future. A few have to be demolished, usually for very good reasons and as a last resort, but many are given new leases of life through alternative uses. The Churches Conservation Trust cares for 325 outstanding churches which, because of their beauty and interest remain unaltered and still consecrated for all to visit and enjoy. The Trust makes them accessible to the public and, of course, to educational groups.

The issues that surround redundant churches can make interesting topics for discussion in the classroom or at the church itself. You might want to think about the following:

- the number of places of worship which have been closed in your area (non-conformist chapels, for example)

- the wide variety of re-use that chapels and churches have been put to (from tyre depots to art galleries, or adaptation for other religions)

- the large sums of money needed to restore or repair a church (nearly always an historic building) and where they could, or should come from.

You could pose specific questions for your pupils and you could take it further by developing role-play, for example:

- You are one of a congregation of 12 (in a village of 100 people) and you love your old church. You have been told to raise £200,000 in two years to pay for repairs to keep it standing. What do you do?

- You have to decide whether to allow a redundant church to be adapted to another use or it will have to be demolished. What kind of re-use would you be happy with and what would you refuse to accept?

MAKING A VISIT

You will need to fetch the key to the church from Kettle's Yard. Contact: Mr Michael Harrison
Kettle's Yard
University of Cambridge
Cambridge CB3 0AQ
Tel: 01223 352124

USEFUL RESOURCES

St Peter's Church, Cambridge, The Churches Conservation Trust, 1985. This is the guidebook taken from a paper by Michael Tooby and containing a detailed history and description. Copies are available at the church.

Fewins, C, *Be a Church Detective: a Young Person's Guide to Old Churches*, The National Society and Church House Publishing, 1992, ISBN 0-7151-4790-0. An excellent introductory guide for pupils.

Mytum, H, *Recording and Analysing Graveyards*, Council for British Archaeology in association with English Heritage, 2000, ISBN 1-902771-09-5. A practical handbook which explains how to set about a graveyard recording project.

The English Parish Church, The Open Churches Trust, 1995. Full colour poster which traces the development of the parish church with details of over 30 churches. Available from English Heritage Education.

English Heritage Education publishes a number of resources on churches for teachers: Morris, R & Corbishley, M, *Churches, Cathedrals and Chapels*, English Heritage, 1996, ISBN 1-85074-447-5. In their series of teacher's guides.

Videos from English Heritage Education, available for sale or on free loan for educational institutions:

Buildings and Beliefs, 1990, 20 minutes.

Cathedral Archaeology, 1996, 21 minutes.

Chapels - the buildings of nonconformity, 1989, 18 minutes.

God's Acre - nature conservation in the churchyard, 1993, 24 minutes.

How Parish Churches Evolved, 1997, 21 minutes.

In Memoriam - the archaeology of graveyards, 1990, 21 minutes.

The Master Builders - the construction of a great church, 1991, 23 minutes.

Local resources

Cambridge and County Folk Museum, 2/3 Castle Street, Cambridge CB3 0AQ. Tel: 01223 3555159

Less than a minute's walk away from St Peter's is the Folk Museum, which could form an excellent combination visit if you are looking at history or social life. The museum is a late 15th-century building, and the collections reflect life in the area from 1700. Introductory talks and workshops are available: contact the Education Officer on Mondays, Tuesdays or Wednesdays. The museum is open to schools for seven days a week, but bookings should be made in advance. There is a small charge for education groups.

Kettle's Yard, Castle Street, Cambridge. Tel: 01223 351124. Kettle's Yard is next door to St Peter's, and contains outstanding examples of 20th-century art. It is the church's keykeeper, and could make an excellent combination visit if you are concentrating on art. The Education Service provides a wide range of free talks and workshops for students and school groups. There are also teachers' sessions to support curriculum and course needs. Admission is free to school and student groups and their teachers when booked in advance.

English Heritage is the national leader in heritage education. It aims to help teachers at all levels to use the resource of the historic environment. Each year it welcomes over half a million pupils, students and teachers on free educational visits to over 400 historic sites in its care. For free copies of the *Free Educational Visits* booklet, the *Resources* catalogue, and *Heritage Learning*, our termly magazine, contact:

English Heritage Education
Freepost 22 (WD214)
London W1E 7EZ
Tel. 020-7973 3442
Fax. 020-7973 3443
e-mail
education@english-heritage.org.uk
www.HeritageEducation.net

The Churches Conservation Trust was established to look after parish churches which have been declared redundant. Currently there are 325 churches in the Trust's care. It has an active programme of repair, maintenance and long-term conservation, as well as providing access, publications and encouraging occasional services. Events are held in many Trust churches. The Trust has joined with English Heritage to establish an education service, of which this booklet forms a part. For more information, contact the Education Officer, Tina Cockett at:

The Churches Conservation Trust
89 Fleet Street
London EC4Y 1DH
Tel. 020-7583 4809
Fax. 020-7936 2284
www.visitchurches.org.uk

Photo credits :all copyright Liz Hollinshead except for The Churches Conservation Trust, p1, Cambridge Folk Museum p2 l, Christopher Dalton, p2 t, Cambridge Newspapers, p3 b, English Heritage p6b. Written by Liz Hollinshead Edited and produced by Mike Corbishley Designed by Alan McPherson Printed by Palladian Press
© The Churches Conservation Trust 2001