

FIT FOR THE 21st CENTURY

St Mary Abbots Restored and Enhanced

St Mary Abbots Kensington is one of the great London parish churches, with the capital's highest spire, and often described as 'cathedral-like' in scale and impression. The stained glass, in particular, is of splendid quality. We enjoy a rich and diverse church life, focussed on an annual, weekly and daily round of services that is indeed cathedral-like in its scope. We are open every day of the year; on average over 370 people share in our Sunday services, over 70 of whom are under 16; each December over 9,500 people worship here; in the last five years we have had 191 baptisms and 93 people confirmed. We are renowned for the range and quality of our music.

All this is evidence of a lively and growing church, and it is our privilege to serve the heart of Kensington, located as we have been for some 1,000 years at the very heart of the Royal Borough, on the junction between Kensington High Street and Kensington Church Street.

But our magnificent church building, the fourth on this site, one of the final masterpieces of the great Victorian architect Sir George Gilbert Scott (who also designed St Pancras Station and the Albert Memorial), is now in a very tired state. It was blitzed in the war and repaired with the best materials then available – but they were essentially of poor quality, are now well beyond their lifespan and must be replaced. Lighting and electrical provision generally falls far short of contemporary standards. No cleaning was done and the interior is dingy and shabby. Most critically, the high roofs are failing and must be completely replaced – in recent storms we had to fill the south aisle with buckets!

In addition, we now wish to use our church building in ways that could not be imagined when it was designed. We celebrate the great tradition of Anglican worship – but since the late C19 that has developed far richer usage, with processions, music and liturgies. Our worship with children (we hold a weekly school Eucharist) and specialist groups (eg the monthly Healing Service and Taize Prayer) frequently employs drama and other presentation. We are in great demand as a venue for appropriate concerts and dramatic performance, close to some of London's greatest colleges of music and art – yet we have to refuse most requests. For although the building is magnificent, it has no facilities to make it suitable as a place of general public gathering. There is in the entire building one lavatory and one tiny sink. It has no kitchen. Despite its great size, there is no open space for gathering – we can't even accommodate an orchestra larger than 20 players, or display an exhibition. The interior, although glorious and splendid for static liturgies, is entirely inflexible, essentially filled with fixed furnishings – and everywhere there are steps making it a minefield for those with impaired mobility or eyesight.

Our **Masterplan** addresses all these issues. It proposes a complete refurbishment of the entire church building, all the necessary replacements and upgrading of services, and new elements that while retaining the Victorian splendour of St Mary Abbots will make it fit for a far wider range of worship, praise and prayer, and also a place of music and celebration and gathering that will enable us to offer our great church to many more events and projects that build up our community. Realising this plan will make us properly able to serve the heart of Kensington, a place fit for the 21st century.

But isn't St Mary Abbots too precious a survival, too complete a creation of 1872 to contemplate any changes whatsoever? In fact this isn't the case. The church has been modified and enhanced in many ways over the last 140 years. The chancel was refitted within a couple of decades. The entrance Cloister, not part of the original design, was added later. The Resurrection Chapel was created as a memorial to the dead of the First World War. The sacristy was formed, and the St Paul Chapel was created, after the Second World War. Over the years various rows of pews have been removed to make a little more space. So what we are proposing is in line with a regular process of bringing the church building in line with contemporary and future needs – just has been done since it was first opened.

THE FULL SCOPE OF WORKS AND THEIR COSTS

The plans have been drawn up by our Inspecting Architect, Colin Kerr, a leading and expert ecclesiastical and conservation architect, who has made a special study of Victorian church architecture. We need to raise a great deal of money to realise them – hardly surprising given the scale of the building and the need to use materials that will last for a century or more. The necessary planning processes and permissions have been granted or are being sought.

This is the complete plan, broken down into separate sections so that the costs of each can be clearly understood. The Quantity Surveyors' estimates in the right-hand column include VAT, fees and increases in costs until 2017.

Note that some items have already been paid for - even completed – and others are not part of the appeal because they are the responsibility of other agencies. They are all included so that the full scope of the project can be appreciated:

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<p>A - Renewal of Nave, Aisles, porches and South Transept Roofs and repairs to High Level Stonework This is an urgent public safety concern. The postwar slates are failing, and falling, and must be completely replaced. A new permeable membrane will be introduced to provide far better heat insulation. High level gutters, drains and downcomers will be repaired and improved to cope with the increase in extreme rainfall. Pinnacles and mouldings will be repaired or replaced. <i>The church has found the resources to put this essential work in hand: it is currently underway.</i></p>	<p>£565,000 -£565,000</p>
<p>B – Repair and Restoration of High Altar Reredos The magnificent marble reredos with mosaic figure of the four evangelists has for many years been falling away from the wall. It has been stripped back, a complex new hidden substructure inserted, and the whole restored to its original splendour. <i>The church devoted accumulated bequests to this very urgent phase, which was completed in Summer 2014</i></p>	<p>£23,500 -£23,500</p>
<p>C – Restoration of Resurrection Chapel This chapel, used for daily weekday morning and Evening Prayer and Holy Eucharist, was created as a memorial to those from the parish killed in the First World War. The church held a special appeal to finance its restoration and approval. The first phase of works – cleaning the ceiling, installing new lighting, restoring the historic Oppy battlefield cross and the wall panelling carved with the names of the fallen and the royal angel memorial – were all completed by 4th August 2014, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the war. <i>Paid for and completed</i> The second phase constitutes resiting the royal angel statue and restoring the magnificent altar reredos <i>Funds raised – currently awaiting scheduling</i> The final works are the re-instating Gilbert Scott’s decoration of the ceiling; cleaning the walls and wall monuments; restoring the stained glass windows and replacing the tabernacle work surrounding the figures, that was destroyed in the 1950’s.</p>	<p>£181,000 - £67,000</p>
<p>D - Creation of New Toilet and Kitchen Block One of the greatest current shortcomings is the impossibility of providing refreshments after events and services in the church – or of offering reasonable lavatory facilities, with baby-change and wheelchair accessibility. This greatly limits the range of events that we would like to accommodate, and reduces the ways in which we can serve our community. A completely new block will be built just beyond the north aisle, which will fit under the aisle windows and so be virtually invisible from the church and make only a modest visual addition to the exterior. It will contain male, female and disabled WCs, a kitchen and a flower room. They will be accessed from the church via new doorways contrived within the north wall in the westernmost bay on the north aisle.</p>	<p>£588,000</p>
<p>E - New Western Bay Narthex Linked to the new kitchens and toilets will be the creation of a new multi-purpose open space in the westernmost bay of nave and aisles, cleared of pews and given a new floor. The Font with its openwork wrought-iron cover will be resited. This is one of the most magnificent objects in the church yet in its present position is often overlooked. The sacrament of baptism has recovered its ancient significance, little appreciated in the C19. What was then a small, private event has now regained its proper place as central to the life of the whole church. We often need to gather over a hundred people around the font – yet this is completely impossible at present. It will be re-sited in the centre of a wide space, after the high altar the second most important location in the church. This newly-opened ‘narthex’ will give us much-needed space to gather before and after services, to offer hospitality, to display materials, and hold exhibitions. At Christmas and the other key times we will fill it with high-quality seating so that we can still accommodate the largest congregations.</p>	<p>£390,000</p>
<p>F - Inner Porch to great West Doors An inner glass doors and lobby will be built to provide draught- and noise-proofing- particularly important when people arrive late during services or events. Perhaps even more importantly, it will mean that throughout the day we will be able to leave the outer wooden doors open so that passers-by can see into the church and realise that it is open and welcoming.</p>	<p>£98,000</p>

<p>G – Interior High Level works to Nave and Aisles</p> <p>One of the dingiest aspects of the church is grime-encrusted 1950s ceiling. This will be cleaned and repainted. The high-level wiring will be replaced, and new lighting, more efficient, more flexible will greatly enhance how the church can be used every day and for special events and services. The upper walls will be cleaned. The clerestory stained glass windows will be restored and the tabernacle work surrounding the figures, that was destroyed in the 1950's, replaced.</p>	<p>£720,000</p>
<p>H - Renewal of Chancel Roofs and repairs to High Level Stonework</p> <p>Replacement of postwar slates A new permeable membrane will be introduced to provide far better heat insulation. High level gutters, drains and downcomers will be repaired and improved to cope with the increase in extreme rainfall. Pinnacles and mouldings will be repaired or replaced.</p>	<p>£225,000</p>
<p>I – Interior High Level works to Chancel and Sanctuary</p> <p>The 1950s ceiling will be cleaned and repainted, reproducing Gilbert Scott's decorative scheme. High-level wiring will be replaced, and new lighting, more efficient, and far more flexible is greatly needed to illuminate the wide range of services that we offer. Provision will be made for performance lighting when that is required for recitals, concerts, drama etc. The upper walls will be cleaned. The choir windows will be restored and renovated.</p>	<p>£345,000</p>
<p>J – Reordering Chancel and Eastern Floor Levels</p> <p>The Chancel, Choir and associated areas of the church are currently far from compliant with current safety and accessibility standards. There are many steps and awkward and unsuspected changes of level, causing constant hazard, and breaking up the space making it impossible to use. There is no step-free access to the chancel and sanctuary area. Further, we are frequently compromised by having far too little clear space at the front of the church. Even placing a catafalque for funerals is awkward. This lack of clear space, as well as causing liturgical difficulties, makes it impossible for us to offer the church for most concerts and other performance. For many liturgies we wish to use, rather than the high altar under the East Window, a forward Altar which recovers the ancient practise of celebrating the Eucharist facing the people, and expresses the vital theological point of us gathering around God's table.</p> <p>To address all these problems the front two rows of nave pews will be removed. The chancel floor between the choir stalls will be raised to the level of the passage before the altar rail and at this level extended into the first bay of the nave.</p> <p>On each side, wheelchair ramps will give step-free access to this level, creating a single level disabled-accessible floor extending throughout the whole eastern arm of the church.</p> <p>Underfloor heating will be installed.</p> <p>The C18 pulpit will be resited to the more traditional south side so that the steps up to it no longer block views of the chancel.</p> <p>The splendid eagle lectern will be re-sided closer to the people.</p> <p>There will be clear space at the front of the pews for wheelchairs.</p> <p>The pews in the eastern bays of the north and south aisle will be turned sideways so that they face into the centre of the church facing, reinforcing the sense of gathering around the altar.</p> <p>A new free-standing Nave Altar will be provided for use as required.</p>	<p>£525,000</p>
<p>K - Renovating Choir and Sanctuary</p> <p>These are the climax to Gilbert Scott's design for our church, and we will complete the work started with the renovation of the High Altar Reredos to restore the ensemble of marble, woodwork, mosaic, mural painting back to its original splendour. This includes the choir and clergy stalls, the ironwork screens behind them, and reintroducing lighting candelabra to the stalls. The whole eastern arm will be rewired and electrical provision enhanced.</p>	<p>£150,000</p>

<p>L - New Vestry, Sacristy and Storage Space The old organ – unplayable for more than a decade – will be removed and in its place to the north of the chancel we will build a three-storey block comprising: ground floor new servers’ vestry; above that a new clergy sacristy; and above that a greatly-needed storage room.</p>	£375,000
<p>M - New Counselling/Meeting/Prayer Room The present Clergy Sacristy will be transformed. The 1950s stone altar and reredos inserted to create the St Paul Chapel will be removed, and Gilbert Scott’s delightful double arches opened up again and filled with engraved glass screens. These will enclose in place of the present sacristy a new, much needed, room/space that will be private but visible to the church for confidential counselling, small meetings, and prayer/meditation. This will reveal to public view once more the ‘Good Shepherd’ window - one of the finest in the church – this will be restored. The Ceiling, walls and wall monuments will be cleaned. New wiring and lighting and underfloor heating will be installed.</p>	£165,000
<p>N - Reordered St Paul’s Chapel The North Transept will be fitted out as a flexible worship space, usually gathered around a central altar, providing us with a greatly-needed environment for smaller informal and varied acts of worship that contrasts with the formality of the Resurrection Chapel. For very large services it will be used for extra seating. The works will include: Repainting ceiling; Renovating stained glass windows; Cleaning walls and wall monuments; Rewiring and new lighting; New floor with underfloor heating; New furnishings.</p>	£300,000
<p>O - Holland Chapel/South Transept This will be cleared and upgraded to provide a meeting area for groups using and visiting the church, a hospitality and gathering area. For very large services it will be used for extra seating. The works will include: Repainting ceiling; Renovating stained glass windows; Cleaning walls and wall monuments; Rewiring and new lighting; New floor with underfloor heating; New furnishings.</p>	£300,000
<p>P – The Nave and Aisles The aisle ceilings will be cleaned and repainted. The walls and wall monuments cleaned. The Aisle stained glass windows will be restored and the tabernacle work surrounding the figures, that was destroyed in the 1950’s, replaced. New electrical wiring will be installed (at present there are 6 sockets in the entire church). The wooden pew platforms will be removed and a new single-level stone floor created, with underfloor heating. The pews renovated. A new Virger’s desk to control the microphone system during services.</p>	£1,341,000
<p>Q - Inner Porches to North and South Doors Glazed lobbies will be built to provide draught- and noise-proofing- particularly important when people arrive late during services or events. Perhaps even more importantly, it will mean that throughout the day we will be able to leave the outer wooden doors open so that passers-by can see into the church and realise that it is open and welcoming.</p>	£195,000
<p>R - New Welcome Area The South Doors are those most intensively used by visitors and congregation. Just inside them, we will create a</p>	

<p>new welcome area with integrated furniture will provide information and materials for all who visit or come to services.</p>	<p>£23,000</p>
<p>S – The Cloister and Outer Porch One of the most distinctive features of St Mary Abbots is the long vaulted cloister that leads from the south door to the outer south porch on Kensington High Street. The porch stonework has suffered greatly from pollution from the traffic, and from the overhanging trees. Renovation will include: Restoration or renovation of stonework; Renewing the cloister lead roof; Cleaning the interior.</p>	<p>£375,000</p>
<p>T – Garth for the Burial of Ashes In common with all London churches, our churchyard was closed for burials by Act of Parliament in the mid C19. There is a strong desire to provide a resting place for those who have worshipped in and loved our church, so we have created beneath the great east window a space where cremated ashes can be buried. It is surrounded by a carved and inscribed stone kerb. <i>Paid for by special bequests and completed in 2014</i></p>	<p>£50,500 - £50,500</p>
<p>U – New Pavement We will create a large paved area immediately to the west of the church, an exterior community gathering space in the heart of Kensington linking church and school, a marshalling area for processions at our great civic services.</p>	<p>£203,000</p>
<p>V - The Churchyard The historic churchyard, place of burial for the people of Kensington for some 900 years, is a remarkable oasis just off Kensington High Street – but is in a very poor state. Together with our partners the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea we will redesign and refurbish this public space while conserving its important historic monuments, gravestones and other elements.</p>	<p>£135,000</p>
<p>W – The Churchyard Railings Sir George Gilbert Scott provided us with magnificent railings to surround and enclose the churchyard – but they are in a shocking state of disrepair. Together with our partners the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, they will be restored and refurbished.</p>	<p><i>Partnership funded</i></p>
<p>X - Long Playground Railings The railings separating this area, which was never part of the historic churchyard and has for at least a century been used as our school playground, were removed in WWII. We have located a photograph showing their design, and will replace them, providing enclosure and security.</p>	<p>£75,000</p>
<p>Total cost</p>	<p>£7,348,000</p>
<p><i>Less monies already raised, spent or pledged or partnership-funded</i></p>	<p>-£605,000</p>
<p>APPEAL TOTAL</p>	<p>£6,743,000</p>
<p>THE SUBJECT OF SEPARATE APPEALS:</p>	
<p>New Nave Pipe Organ The former organ was a distinguished instrument – but in quite the wrong place. Hidden behind stonework and boxed into a solid chamber, it was successively enlarged throughout its 125 year of life to try to make it louder in the nave – but this largely made it deafening in the choir without improving sound elsewhere in the church. A major flood some 15 years ago rendered it essentially unrepairable. We will build a completely new organ on a gallery above the second bay of the north aisle and bracketed out above the arcade. The splendid acoustics of the nave mean that a smaller specification will provide an instrument that will speak far more clearly throughout the church, give a stronger lead to the congregation, and enhance St Mary Abbots’ reputation as a leading venue for music. The console gallery will be able to accommodate small choirs and soloists, performing out to the congregation. This new location means that the organ can be built with traditional design and techniques that have been tried and tested over centuries and won’t require the 30-year</p>	



rebuilding process so familiar with some modern instruments. It will have a striking case that will add to the visual impact of the interior, and provide scale and articulation to the main nave.	£1,050,000
New Choir Organ A small organ will be installed in the gallery that houses the console for the previous Grand Organ destroyed by flood damage, to accompany small services that take place in the choir alone (nb, the choir itself can seat up to 40 people, and is from time to time chosen by families for intimate weddings, funerals and other services)	£35,000

ST MARY ABBOTS MASTERPLAN

