

Can you help?

All gifts and donations to help us rescue this historic and beautiful bell tower and install facilities such as a toilet for people with disabilities, a kitchen and associated drainage would be gratefully received.

Please either put your donation in the **box attached to the wall near the north door**, or send cheques payable to the 'Church Tower and Fabric Fund' to the Priest in Charge—Rev. Jane Lucas, the Rectory, Ashwater, Devon, EX21 5EZ (please use the form below).

If you are able to *Gift Aid* your donation this helps us further with our fund-raising, as we can claim 25% extra money from HMRC (please use the form below).

If you would like to be kept informed of our progress and our fund-raising events, please complete the form below and post to the Priest in Charge.

I enclose a Gift-Aided donation / I would like to assist with fund-raising / Please send me details of progress and fundraising events for St Peter ad Vincula **Church Tower repairs.*

Name (Mr / Mrs/ Ms / Dr).....

Address.....post code

Or Email Address.....

**delete as appropriate*

Cheques to 'Church Tower and Fabric Fund'

'Post to: Rev. Jane Lucas, the Rectory, Ashwater, Devon EX21 5EZ

OUR CHURCH TOWER IS IN TROUBLE



Unfortunately the ancient tower has been letting in water for some time and is now in desperate need of serious repair. We are urgently seeking to raise funds for this restoration. Increasingly

using the church for community events, one of our aims will be to incorporate additional facilities into the church, such as a toilet suitable for people with disabilities and kitchen facilities. The estimate for the cost of all the work needed is around £140,000.

Tower History

The church is mainly 14th and late 15th century in date and while the exact date of the tower is not known, we do know that it was struck by lightning in 1699 and the pinnacles were added when it was repaired and restored around that date.

Writing in 1929, local historian – Preb. G D Melhuish who was the Rector of Ashwater from 1897 to 1935— writes: “A fine tower is attached to the church at the west end. There are six bells. The oldest bell dates from 1671, three from 1772, one is undated and the last was added in 1929”. Elsewhere he records that “1772 saw the recasting of the Church Bells and number 5 bell was inscribed ‘I call the quick to Church, the dead to grave - Thomas Melhuish Rector– IP””

Between 1864 and 1897 a great deal more ‘restorative’ work was throughout the church and at that time the bells were rehung.

The tower was the venue for a bell-ringing competition for King George III’s jubilee in 1809. Ashwater’s bells rang for Waterloo; local men watched from the tower for enemy bombers in World War II; the bells rang Victory

peals at War’s end and again to mark the Millennium; they are rung for our weddings and funerals—and for our Sunday services each week—little wonder the bell tower is cherished by the whole community.

The bells and the tower feature in a song that dates from the time of **George III’s Golden Jubilee in 1809**, the first royal jubilee to be celebrated in this country. The song was collected by Rev’d. Sabine Baring Gould from William George Kerswell of Postbridge, an old Dartmoor farmer and was included in Baring Gould’s ‘Songs of the West’

Extract from ‘Devon’ by W. G. Hoskins (1954)

“Ashwater is an attractive little village grouped around a green. The church (St. Peter) is interesting. It has a splendid Norman font of a Cornish type, with unique ornament and a N. doorway of the same date. Otherwise the church is mainly 14th - and late 15th - cent. in date. Notice the curious S. arcade, which is said to date from a thorough restoration in 1676-7 when the churchwardens’ accounts show that nearly £200 was spent on the fabric. Notice, too, the carved roofs. Some of the bench-ends are c.1500, but most are the work of a local craftsman.”



It is believed that the pulpit and the vestry surround were also carved by the same local Victorian craftsman - Mr J. Northcott.