

# ST PETER'S CHURCH

Things are very different today to the early days in the life of St Peter's Church. Even though it is the only place of worship in the village today, it is home to only a small congregation. However, this small village Church does hold a special place in the hearts of many local people and the village is friendly and supportive of the Church and its work.

Until the creation of the ecclesiastical parish of Port Isaac in 1913 the village formed part of the the parish of St Endellion, where burials still take place. However, the incumbents of Endellion took little interest in the needs of Port Isaac.

It wasn't until the creation of the Diocese of Truro in 1877 when the Bishop, Frederick Benson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, took a personal interest in the pastoral provision for Port Isaac. He sent a newly ordained Deacon, Frank Carter, to provide services in the village.

Within a week of arriving Carter was holding services in the then Lifeboat House on Fore Street (now the *Boathouse Stores*). In a memoir contributed to Thomas Taylor's history of St Endellion in 1929, Carter commented,

**“IT WAS, I SUPPOSE, THE FIRST TIME FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD THAT THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL HAD BEEN PREACHED TO THESE PEOPLE IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.”**

This reveals all too clearly that, ignored by the established Church, Port Isaac had for more than a century been prominent in the Methodist revival, amply fulfilling John Wesley's description of it as

**“THE LIVELIEST PLACE IN THE CIRCUIT”**

Carter extended his work to Port Gaverne and Port Quin and when a new Rector of Endellion was appointed in 1880 he was allowed to continue this work. Financial support was secured by his appointment to one of the vacant Prebends at Endellion. This enabled Carter to arrange for the appointment of an assistant, Mr Bree who looked after Port Isaac whilst Carter extended his missionary activity further afield, starting a beach mission at Polzeath.

Bishop Benson instigated the building of the Church of St Peter as a Chapel-of-Ease in the Parish of St Endellion. Work started in 1882 and the Church was dedicated on August 5th 1884 by Benson's successor, Bishop Wilkinson. The cost was £1771, donated by the rich and from the poor, and the building materials were granite and stone, the style adopted Early English. The Church, built to accommodate about 300 worshippers, had a chancel, nave, north porch and a turret containing one bell. Canon Carter recalled the occasion as

**“A RED LETTER DAY IN THE STORY OF PORT ISAAC”**

In 1884 Carter was succeeded by Arthur Palmes, the Vicar of Bodmin. As well as being a Prebend at St Endellion, Palmes continued supporting the work of a curate in Port Isaac and a succession of assistant curates of Bodmin served, in Port Isaac until 1913.

The earliest service book still in existence for St Peter's begins in 1888 with the coming of a new Curate, Ernest Drewe, Bree's successor. Two regular services were held at 11am and 6pm every Sunday with an occasional afternoon service.

### *Problems with the building ...*

Originally the west end wall was constructed with five lancet windows. By 1932 the condition of this wall was so dangerous because of subsidence caused by an old mine digging at the junction of Trewetha Lane and Back Lane, traditionally known as Mine Pit Corner, that it had to be taken down. Canon Carter records,

**“THIS REFLECTED LITTLE CREDIT ON THOSE WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTING AND PREPARING THE SITE FOR THE CHURCH”**

When rebuilt the west end contained the present three windows instead of the original five and it's only recently, some 88 years later that the church has undergone major refurbishment and repair.

### *The new Parish*

In 1913, Port Isaac gained its first Vicar and became a Parish Church (though more recently it has returned to St Endellion Parish). The creation of a new Parish was a rare event. The first Vicar, William Turnavine Martyn, was appointed in 1913. He spent the rest of his life in Port Isaac and when he retired in 1937 he took on the role of assistant to his successors. In 1919, the diocese purchased for £700 a property, then known as *Tresythcarne*, as a vicarage. This property survives as *Castle Rock View*, on the coast path near the car park.

Rev C W Stenson-Stenson was the next incumbent. He served for eight years until the end of the war (during the war years his wife was the air raid warden). Next came Rev Atterbury Thomas, who was described by James Platt as

**“THE VERY MODEL OF A MODERN RURAL VICAR, URBANE AND COMPASSIONATE, WEARING HIS FAITH LIKE A BADGE”**

After four years he was succeeded by Rev Soady who only stayed for two years. Then in 1955, Rev Townend was appointed priest-in-charge and he served until his retirement in 1973. In anticipation of his appointment the existing vicarage was sold and *Sudbrooke House* (now called *The Old Vicarage*) in Trewetha Lane bought instead.

The next three vicars didn't stay too long. Rev Clarence Simpson from 1974-1977, Rev Maddock for just a year from 1978-1979 and Rev Paul Foot from 1980-1983.

And so, in 1984 Port Isaac was again re-united with Endellion in a new United Benefice with Peter Fryer, a Rector, living at Endellion. In 1991 he was succeeded by Michael Bartlett. In 2007 the three parishes joined together with St Minver in a new Cluster of North Cornwall Churches with John May at the helm until 2013. Elizabeth Wild took over in 2015 and in 2018 everything had turned full circle with St Peter's rejoining with St Endellion to become the parish of St Endellion with St Peter's Port Isaac.