

THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

To quote preacher Hugh Peters in 1651 in his speech to Cromwell's victorious and departing Parliamentary army:

"Tell your wives and children you have been to Powick, where England's sorrow began and where they were happily ended".

The first battle of the English Civil War in 1642 took place on Powick Bridge. The final battle in 1651, the Battle of Worcester, initially took place in and around the village of Powick, including the area in which St Peter's stands.

St Peter's Church, Powick, which dates back to the 12th Century, has stood at the heart of the village community for over 900 years and has borne witness in thousands of events, great and small, but now St Peter's church at Powick faces a fight all of its own!

The stonework of the tower, which still bears the scars of muskets fired during the Battle of Worcester in 1651, is showing serious signs of weather wear and the roof above the south transept needs urgent repair.

Similar problems are not unknown to parish churches throughout the land, but at Powick the Parochial Church Council is proposing a novel solution. It is going backwards to go forwards.



Drawing on its pivotal location - it lies a mile from the opening skirmish of the English Civil War at Powick Bridge in 1642, while the final battle nine years later was fought all around it - the plan is to create a visitor centre at St Peter's to celebrate its unique place in history. Such a facility in a historic setting would create a fascinating educational resource for schools, colleges, tourists and wider public, Partnerships with Worcester's Civil War Centre at the Commandery and Worcester Cathedral have been agreed.

By opening up space in the church, which has room for 250 worshippers, its doors will be thrown open to more community use. As Jonathan Slade, Powick PCC secretary, said, "In the Middle Ages churches were used for all sorts of things. They were useable open spaces. They even held sheep and livestock markets. We are not intending to go quite that far, but this is a valuable community asset that has become underused. We hope to use the church's history to secure its future."

The Visitors' Centre is planned for the light and airy Lady Chapel, where there is a memorial to Sir Daniel Tyas, Mayor of Worcester during the Civil War. Another memorial is the magnificent reclining marble figure by the sculptor Thomas Scheemaeckers of Mary Russell who died in 1786, which is described as his 'masterpiece'.

As well as its Civil War connection, the new centre would include other subjects for which Powick is famous, such as the UK's first electric power station by the River Teme Bridge and the mental asylum at the top of the village, where Sir Edward Elgar conducted the staff band.