

North Aisle Project - Statement of Significance (Rev 4)

(1) The proposal

The present North Aisle of the Church is a much under-utilised area of the Church which also houses an oak timber screened choir vestry. This has become not only an area in which to dump unwanted paraphernalia, but it masks the two most important stained glass windows in the Church. Whilst being sympathetic to our heritage, we want to bring this whole area into regular use such that it can enhance the present activities of the Church and open up the windows in order that they become readily visible and are rightly restored to prominence within the Church.

The proposal for the North Aisle is to:

- a) Remove the 10 fixed pews from the outer North Aisle area.
- b) Dismantle the choir vestry which was installed in 1954 whilst making use of the wood in the structure.
- c) Create an open area for a range of activities to which we will refer later.
- d) Create an open kitchen area at the west end of the area.
- e) Modify the existing small kitchen to become a Vicar's vestry.
- f) Enlarge the present Vicar's vestry to become a choir vestry.

(2) Pattingham

Pattingham is a village in South Staffordshire, close to the border with Shropshire. The village lies seven miles to the west of Wolverhampton and seven and a half miles east of Bridgnorth. The parish of Pattingham and Patshull, in the diocese of Lichfield, straddles the Staffordshire/Shropshire border.

The first written record is in the Domesday Book of 1086, but this does mention its Saxon history. Roman relics have been found which suggest that the village was in existence in the days of the Roman occupation from AD 78 to 410.

Pattingham was originally a farming community but expanded housing in the mid to late 20th century led to it becoming a dormitory village for the West Midlands conurbation. The population of the village is around 2,500.

(3) The Church – a summary

(a) Early history and background

The dedication of the Pattingham Parish Church to Chad, a seventh century Celtic bishop, suggests that there has been a church on this site since Saxon times. Much of the building work dates from the early thirteenth century. The chancel dates from 1220-1240. It is a grade II* listed building.



The 17th century church

The oldest extant portion of St Chad's Church dates from the late 12th century. The church was rebuilt in the mid 17th century following a devastating fire.

The church has been significantly altered and improved by successive generations.

The church had 5 bells in 1553. The back 6 of the current bells all date from 1724.

The bell openings and louvres appear to date from before the end of the 18th century as they are shown in pictures of the church from that period.

The nave has been largely rebuilt but still retains the characteristics of the Early English period. There is a well moulded hood ending in heads, particularly a fine head of Our Lord. The tower, dating from 1330 - 1380, is peculiar in that it is wholly within the church. The south wall also dates from the decorated period, about 1350. On the outside are two Mass clocks, or scratch dials, used to tell people the time of services.

(b) The Victorian Period

A comprehensive building and restoration programme was carried out in the nineteenth century. Before this (*in 1843 as noted by Rev Brighton*) the church was in a state of disrepair. Much of the exterior was decayed and weatherworn. The interior walls were whitewashed. The pews were of all kinds of irregular sizes, some with locks and some with stoves.



Church before the spire was added, c.1844



Church with new spire, c. late 1870s

The building works were largely down to the foresight of Rev W. G. Greenstreet and funding from the Earl of Dartmouth. George Gilbert Scott was the architect. The Consistory Court of Lichfield granted a faculty to repair, restore and “*repew*” the church and build a new aisle and vestry.



Chancel, nave and south aisle, c. late 1870s

The chancel, nave and south aisle were restored. The (Early English) chancel was restored in 1856 and opened for services the following year. The north aisle and vestry, paid for by the vicar, were built by 1864/5. Work on the rest of the church followed immediately.

Restoration of the tower was completed in 1866 and a new spire added in 1871. The six bells were tuned and re-hung in a new oak frame in 1864. Two smaller bells were added, making an augmented ring of eight. The new bells were paid for by subscriptions but all the other work was paid for by the Earl of Dartmouth. The bells were re-hung and the clock and chimes restored to commemorate Queen Victoria's diamond Jubilee.

The organ was installed in 1873, with the decoration added in 1876. The organist sat in the south aisle to play it.

New pews were fitted throughout.

The photograph to the left shows the interior c. late 1870s before the reredos was erected (in 1890).

Note the decorated organ - and the pews at the east end of the south aisle, facing north.

The reredos of alabaster with mosaic glass was erected in 1890.

Most of the stained glass is Victorian. Starting with the Adam and Eve window on the west wall of the north aisle, the glass in that aisle shows the heroes and heroines of the Old Testament. The windows in the chancel tell the story of the life of Jesus. The Lady Chapel shows the disciples and other leaders of the early church. The south wall windows relate the parables and sayings of Jesus, whilst that in the west wall by the font is dedicated to the Holy Family. The tower window in the west wall showing the resurrection was installed in 1893; the gift of 181 subscribers, in memory of William Walter, the 5th Earl of Dartmouth (*who was responsible for erection of the spire*).

There is a large number of stone and brass memorials around the church.

(c) Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Changes

The Lady Chapel was created and furnished in 1918 in memory of Brigadier General T. A. Wight Boycott. It was further restored in 1939.

St Martin's Chapel, i.e. the war memorial area, was initially furnished after the Great War in memory of those from the parish. It was further furnished after the Second World War to commemorate those who died in both wars.

The choir vestry, in the north aisle, was built in 1954-6. Eleven pews were removed and 2 screens erected. The pews were sold or given to other churches.

The present pulpit was moved and re-built in 1956. The two front pews in the nave were removed.

The bells were tuned and re-hung in 1957.

The organ was modernised in 1959 and extensively overhauled in 1961.

The baptistry area in the south aisle was created in 1982. One pew was removed and others re-sited and slightly modified.

The area at the west end of the south aisle was panelled in memory of Colonel Eric Butler, who died in 1985. That included oak cupboards and the recently installed cupboards by the Adam and Eve window match those.

In 1992 the tower was strengthened to prevent excessive movement; and the bells were retuned and rehung in a new steel frame.

The "Loft" extension was carried out in 1999-2003. Four pews were removed and sold. This was a major construction project. This involved dismantling the east wall of the north aisle and moving it to create space for the vicar's vestry, kitchen and disabled toilet on the ground floor and a toilet and meeting room on the first floor.

New glass doors were added to the west porch in 2015. These have the dual effect of making the church more inviting whilst insulating the entrance from the weather. As one walks down the path to the church it is so welcoming, as you see right into the building when the main door is open and the church is lit inside.

An audio-visual system was installed in 2016. This has made a major difference to the services and events we hold in the church. The use of carefully placed screens means that the whole congregation can see what is going on; whereas before, if you were sitting in the side aisles, you could see little or nothing. We now make use of multimedia in our services whether it be relaying images of the service to screens in the side aisles or directly projecting items for presentations or from the internet. The improvement in the whole experience of "going to church" is staggering. The only exception relates to

the limited view from the front seats of the North Aisle and it is proposed that this be corrected with the installation of an additional screen on the east wall of that aisle. The rear pew in the nave contains the console to control the system.

The heating system was upgraded in 2017 with new boilers and underfloor heating pipes. What was once a somewhat cold and draughty church is now warm in the winter again, encouraging people to join us in our various activities.

In 2019 a further major upgrade was undertaken to the organ.

In 2021 the Lady Chapel was reordered. A votive candle stand and chairs were introduced and nine free standing pews, some of which were previously in the Lady Chapel and others elsewhere in the church, were disposed of.

A faculty was granted in 2021 in relation to the area in front of the Adam and Eve window, which is adjacent to the area in front of the west door. Bespoke storage cupboards have been installed below the window and these will complement the proposed design of the kitchen cupboards. The floor below the window has been levelled and tiled to match the existing tiles. A free standing pew has been disposed of. Additionally, the nearby West Door was restored and draught proofed in 2024 following the granting of a faculty the previous year. The wooden screen and curtains inside the west door have also been removed such that the entire area has been sympathetically restored and brought into regular use.

(4) Assessment of Impact

The removal of the screen between the choir vestry and the remainder of the North Aisle will enable the windows which are currently in the choir vestry to be seen unhindered. These are said to be the best windows in the church and the setting of these features will be significantly improved with the works. One is by Charles Kempe and is dedicated to Rev W G Greenstreet, Vicar of the Parish for 53 years and during whose incumbency the church was restored and enlarged by the addition of the North Aisle. The other is by the firm C. E Kempe and Co. Impact on historic significance here can be deemed to be positive. Harm on the 1956 Vestry screen would be less than significant as much of it would remain intact, whilst other sections of it would be re-used within the scheme.

The removal of the 10 fixed pews from the outer North Aisle is part of the continuing changes to this part of the church since the North Aisle was built over 150 years ago. The pews in the Nave, the inner North Aisle and the South Aisle will remain and therefore most of the pews which were installed as part of the reordering in 1865 will remain, making any negative impact less than significant. The Pews to be removed are Oak open pews with moulded ends and whilst they are of good quality, they are not particularly significant or ornate in their design. Similar pews attributed to Scott can be commonly found in the marketplace and the significance of the pew is not particularly enhanced by its setting when you account for the fact that many similar designs exist that are not attributed to Gilbert Scott. If Gilbert Scott's pews in Bath Abbey can be used in comparison, Patteringham's pews are also far from his finest examples. In terms of completeness, the pews are a similar design throughout the church but some to the rear of the Outer North Aisle have already been lost when the current Vestry Screen was installed in the 1950's. I have attached some further images.

The tiled floor consists of red and black quarry tiles which are functional and set in a simple diaper pattern that will be continued with any new tiling. None are encaustic and several are loose, seemingly bedded on a very weak lime ash bed. The cast iron heating grilles do in fact dominate the walkways in the outer North Aisle with a disproportionate grille-to-tile ratio. Based on this crude appearance it is probable that the heating tranches were installed later – the extract text would suggest a single apparatus (e.g, a coke stove) was originally installed and therefore the piped wet system must have followed after. The cast iron grille units themselves look to be standard castings.

The proposed changes will continue the evolution of the North Aisle which has taken place over the years to enable the church to respond to the needs of each generation. The changes proposed to the ground floor of the Loft area will enhance that area also and make it more useable.

The kitchen to be installed at the west end of the North Aisle will be designed and constructed sympathetically to the existing structure and furnishings and will complement the history and significance of the building. The screen, which is being retained to the side of the kitchen, will mean that the kitchen is not visible from either the south or west doors and will also provide a discreet storage area for the tables when they are not in use. Other components of the screen that are being de-erected will be used and adapted as part of the new kitchen fittings, so there will be little of the 1956 screen actually removed from the building. Schemes of a similar nature where the kitchen area is open have been implemented in other listed churches within the diocese without detrimental effect on the building interior.

In summary these proposals form part of the continuing development of the church since the mid 19th century to enable it to meet the needs of its users whilst continuing to be a traditional place of worship at the centre of the village, both physically and metaphorically.

Parochial Church Council
St Chad's Church, Pattingham with Patshull
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