

ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGLES, BERWICK, SUSSEX  
HERITAGE STATEMENT



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ARTEMIS HERITAGE

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Brian was Lecturer and then Senior Lecturer in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Reading for sixteen years. He was then Head of Education and Lifelong Learning at the Royal Town Planning Institute and subsequently Conservation Officer at the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. He has been working as a Heritage Consultant at Artemis Heritage since 2013. He is a full member of the Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and a member of the Education and Standards Committee.

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From 2010-2014, Diana undertook casework for the Church Buildings Council and managed its programme of Wolfson-funded fabric repair grants. Since 2014, she has been engaged in heritage consultancy at Artemis Heritage as well as researching the stained glass of Keith New, designer of three of the nave windows at Coventry Cathedral.

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St Michael & All Angels Church viewed from the north



The interior looking east

## INTRODUCTION

St Michael and All Angels, Berwick Village, Berwick, Polegate, Sussex, BN26 6SR

### LOCATION

National Grid Reference: TQ 51884 04921  
 District: South Downs National Park  
 District Type: Unitary Authority  
 Parish: Berwick  
 Diocese: Chichester

### STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

#### LISTED BUILDING

The church was listed Grade I in August 1966. The description in the national list is brief:

*Built of flint with stone dressings and tiled roof. Chancel, nave with aisles, and west tower with broached shingled spire. C13 with later windows, spire rebuilt in 1774, the whole restored in 1856. The church contains a series of C20 mural paintings by Quentin and Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant of 1942-3. Monument to John Nutt dated 1656. Easter Sepulchre and Piscina [sic].*

#### CONSERVATION AREA

The church and the Old Rectory to its west are located at the extreme south of the Berwick Conservation Area, which was originally designated by Wealden District Authority. Management of the Conservation Area passed to the South Downs National Park Authority, the newest of the national parks, soon after it was established in 2010. At present there is no up-to-date appraisal and management plan available.

### ECCLESIASTICAL EXEMPTION

The church and churchyard benefit from Ecclesiastical Exemption as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (England) Order 2010 (SI 2010 No 1176). External development or demolition would require listed building consent. The site is in a Conservation Area. Any modifications to the fabric of the church or the churchyard must be granted a faculty from the Diocesan Chancellor. In reaching a judgement the Chancellor will take into account comments from the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), Historic England, relevant amenity societies and the Church Buildings Council (CBC).

## 1 UNDERSTANDING ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS

The medieval church is one of several located in small villages in the lee of the north face of the South Downs between Lewes and Eastbourne. Before the arrival of the railway on the north side of the A27, the nucleus of the village was closer to the church and was once larger, as there is evidence of a deserted medieval settlement between the church and the main Lewes-Eastbourne road. The economy was primarily agricultural, a fact amply described in the collected writings of the Revd Edward Boys Ellman, who was the rector from 1846 until 1906 (Ellman 2006). He affirmed in 1856 that there were no resident gentry and therefore no patronage, as there was no manor associated with Berwick (ICBS 4982). In the 19th century the population was in decline and the rector was the patron of the chancel.

In the 20th century this part of Sussex became a haven for a number of artists. Members of the Bloomsbury Group found some tranquillity here, away from the war effort in London: Virginia and Leonard Woolf in Rodmell, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant at Charleston Farmhouse, and Maynard Keynes at Tilton



*View from the medieval south aisle into the nave*



*The 14th-century tomb on the north wall of the chancel*

House near Firle. The next generation of artists was also attracted to the area: for example, also near Firle, Peggy Angus at Furlongs, where Eric Ravilious was a frequent visitor, while Roland Penrose, the Surrealist, and Lee Miller lived at Chiddingly. Due to proximity to the English Channel, residents in the same calm place could not escape the menace of German aircraft and bombs in the Second World War, which was to have an effect on St Michael and All Angels.

In plan, the church consists of a two-bay nave with aisles, three bay chancel with small north vestry, a tower with a splayed-foot spire to the west and a south porch. It is built of flint, coursed for the most part, with some knapped details on the south aisle. On the tower and also on the south aisle, there are courses of brick that are probably indicative of repairs. There are stone dressings to the windows and on the quoins of the tower.

## 1.1 MEDIEVAL CHURCH

Both the mound in the churchyard and the font have stimulated considerable conjecture about their earliest date.

The mound is inconclusively described as an undated bowl barrow (MES2809) or more recently as a medieval motte (MES7922). Ellman (2006, p.219) records that the height of the mound was increased in the 18th century. It is now the location of the village war memorial.

The font is sometimes attributed to the Norman period, therefore pre-dating the earliest visible fabric in the church (e.g. Clarke c.1955), due to the simplicity of its unadorned tub-shape and location in the angle created by the attached respond of the south arcade and the tower. Stewart amusingly describes its appearance as being like "a copper in a cottage" (n.d.). Without further evidence it would seem to belong to the earliest fabric, which is likely to be 13th-century.

To the same period can be dated the two-bay south arcade where the arches have a simple but broad chamfer rising from moulded capitals on semi-octagonal responds against the chancel and tower walls, and a single octagonal column. The north arcade may have been similar once but was altered substantially in the 19th-century (see 1.3). The chancel too is 13th-century, with simple lancets, set within deep splayed, squared off unusually at the top above slender engaged shafts.

The tomb on the north side of the chancel, erroneously called an Easter Sepulchre in several sources, is 14th-century in its detailing. The cusping ending in small rosettes echoes the cusping on the eastern window in the south wall of the south aisle, suggesting that the church was re-styled through the patronage associated with the unknown person interred in the tomb. The tracery of the old east chancel window may have been similarly detailed to judge from the watercolour in the church dating to c.1850 (see 1.2).

The tower is medieval, and appears to have been rebuilt at various dates: in 1603, due to the presence of a brick bearing this date (not seen by the authors), and again in the 19th-century restoration (Pevsner 2013).

## 1.2 POST-MEDIEVAL ALTERATIONS

A watercolour held by the parish, depicts the church as it must have appeared before its restoration in 1856. The view is however later than 1846 when Rev Edward Boys Ellman became Rector and almost immediately built a new rectory, visible in the background, due to the severe dilapidations of the old house. Viewed from the east, the tower has a shallow pyramidal cap, a replacement for the previous spire that had been struck by lightning in 1774. The north aisle retains only the east and west walls as buttresses, and there is an outline of the former arcade in the north wall. At the west end of the dilapidated aisle,





Left: Mid 19th-century view showing pre-restoration building  
Above: Woodyer's reconstructed north aisle

there appears to be a roofed space perhaps allowing passage in and out of the building on the north side.

In the same watercolour, the east wall of the nave has a square window of four leaded lights of a domestic nature; the gable appears to be weather-boarded. The east chancel window is a square-headed, two-light perpendicular window with hood mould and label stops. Did the cusping of the lights in this window influence Henry Woodyer when he restored the church in 1856, as, allowing for artistic licence, there are some similarities with the cusping he adopted in the aisle windows? Ellman recalled how tumbledown the church was, when he first saw it in 1837 at the start of a two-year curacy (2006, p.111). A fuller description can be found in 1.3.

A citation for a faculty dated 13 August 1774 (EPII/27/19 in the West Sussex Record Office) requests permission:

*to take down the North-East Isle of the said church and to make use of the Materials thereof towards building a Gallery at the west end of the said church.*

Cooper's study of the Berwick parochial records mentions that there were "wainscote pews on the north side of the chancel for parson and family" (1853), while Ellman himself had described how "the high pews had been added to and heightened till few people could see over the tops" (2006, p.112). This would indicate that the building was altered at some stage possibly in the 17th-century, perhaps by Rev John Nutt, rector of Berwick from 1618-1653. The monument to Nutt and his wife, attributed to John Stone, a prominent London sculptor of the period (Pevsner 2013), used to be positioned in the chancel, before being relocated to the tower in the 19th-century restoration. Cooper (1853) describes how the monument "perpetuates the good man's features"

whereas the revised Pevsner is more dismissive, "flat, fat faces".

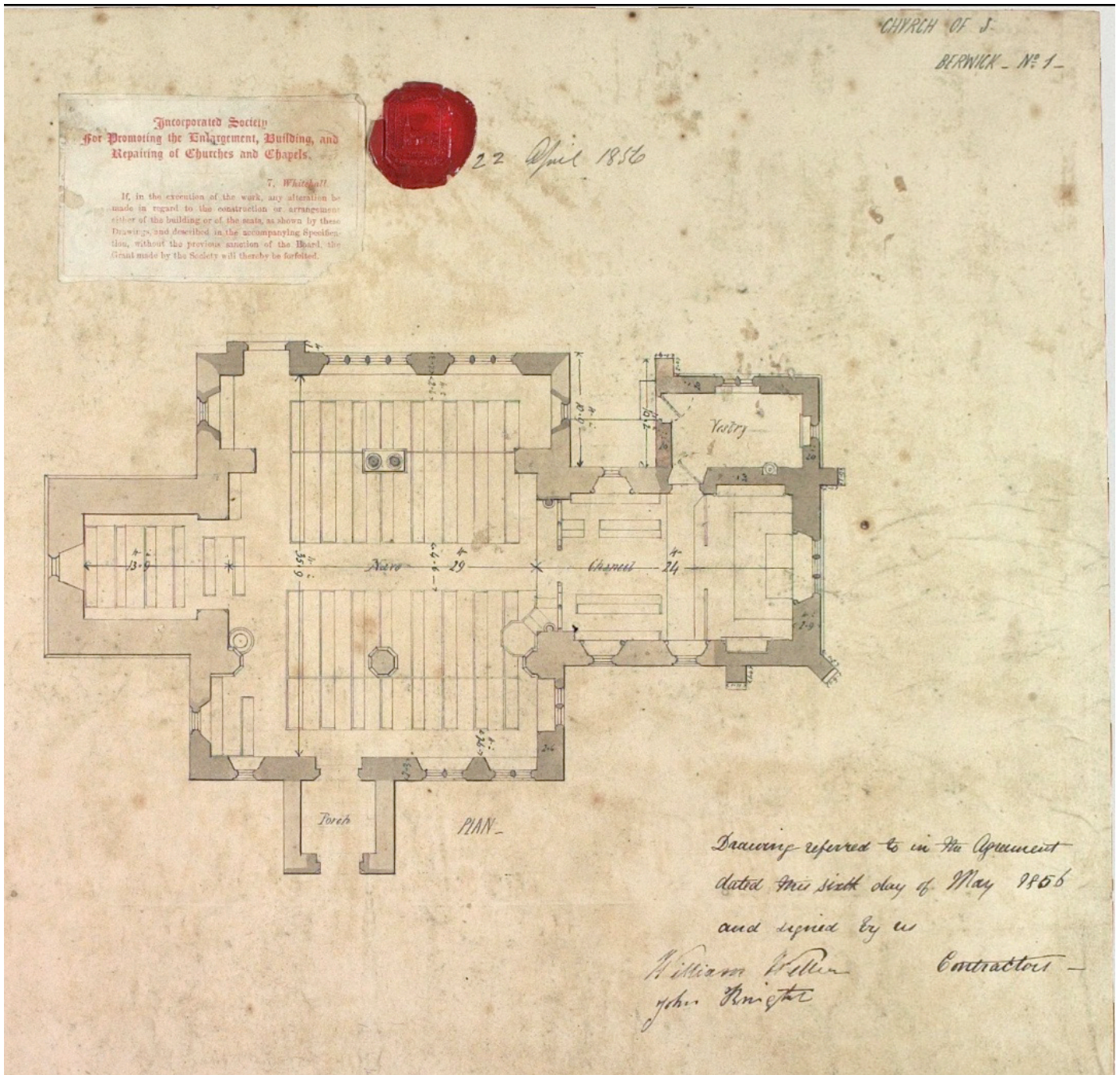
### 1.3 19TH-CENTURY RESTORATION

The recollections and musings of Ellman were collated by his daughter, Maude Walker, and initially published in 1912 (2006). Sadly they do not explain how or why the architect Henry Woodyer was selected for the task of restoring the church. Although both men were near contemporaries at Oxford, Ellman at Wadham College from 1833 onwards, and Woodyer at Merton College from 1835, it is not known whether they ever met. Certainly Woodyer was 'local' in the sense of being based in Guildford (Blee 2016, p.9); the majority of Woodyer's commissioned works is to be found in Berkshire and Surrey, with Hampshire and Sussex having the next greatest numbers. As Elliott and Pritchard demonstrated (2002), Woodyer was able to take advantage of the rapid expansion of the railways; Berwick Station opened in 1846 on the London Brighton and South Coast Railway between Lewes and Hastings.

As patron of the chancel Rev Ellman paid for its restoration, but he needed to raise the funds for the remainder of the restoration and repairs. He applied to the Incorporated Church Building Society (ICBS 4982) in March 1856. In the application, the intentions were set out as "restoring the chancel to its original size"; "rebuilding the N aisle, and the walls of the S aisle"; "building a vestry" and "restoring the spire". An applicant needed to indicate the extent of any recent repairs, and Ellman recorded that the church:

*is now in a dilapidated state owing to the destruction of the north aisle about 1750, - the spire by lightning in 1784 [sic] - the accumulation of mould on the south side (in one part to the height of 5 feet above the flooring,) the wet, stoking into the walls, from want of proper drainage, injury to the roof from being many years occupied as a rabbit warren.*





Above: Woodyer's plan with proposed seating and extent of new work marked in dark grey (Courtesy of Lambeth Palace Library)  
Below: Left: north aisle flooring; Centre: walkway to north door; Right: 20th-century wood block floor in south aisle







*Sedilia in the chancel*



*View of Woodyer's chancel screen and pulpit transformed in the 1940s*

A marginal note also records that

*the repairs executed in 1847 consisted of relaying the South Roof, & the roof of the tower, & in 1851 - the walls of the tower were repaired.*

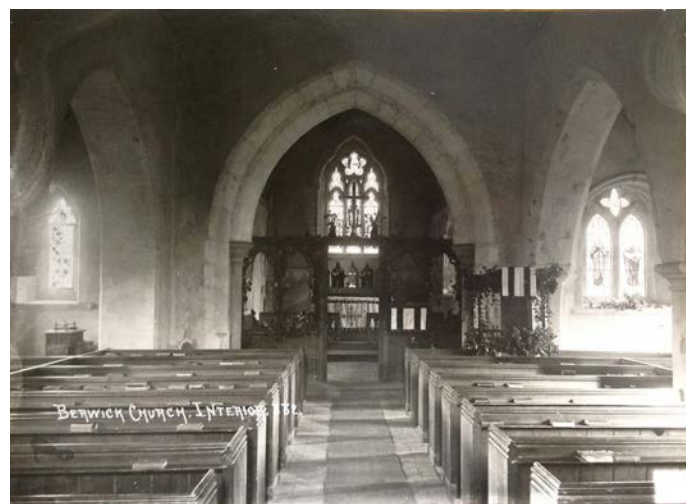
The ICBS awarded a grant of £40 in April 1856. The plan accompanying the application makes clear the extent of Woodyer's restoration (see opposite):

- The north wall was reopened and the two-bay arcade reinstated with the unusual small paired columns with moulded capitals supporting the springing of the arches; there are no capitals where the shallow chamfered arches meet the tower and chancel walls.
- The north door was rebuilt as well as the wall of the aisle with the unusual four-light and three-light windows that do not mirror those in the south aisle.
- The windows at the west and east ends of the north aisle were new insertions.
- The south wall of the south aisle was completely rebuilt, and the architect appears to have respected the original openings. The jambs and south face of the porch were rebuilt. Ellman (2006, p.219) records how, during the restoration, a skeleton was discovered beneath the old foundations, indicative of earlier burials in this part of the churchyard.
- The chancel arch was renewed and a timber screen inserted, with decoration limited to delicate tracery cusping in the arcade. The pulpit was installed at the same time on the south side of the

nave with access from just in front of the chancel screen; its cusping is today obscured by the painted panels that have been applied.

- The east end of the chancel was altered significantly and extended slightly to accommodate a sedilia on the south side, designed by the architect, and the 14th-century tomb beneath a wall canopy. A new three-light window was installed at the east end.
- All the window glass in the church consisted of plain quarries.
- The nave, aisles, and tower were all pewed in pine, the seats in the tower being reserved for school children. Despite the dwindling population (233 in 1811 down to 175 in 1851 according to ICBS 4982), the parish proposed to seat 157, an improvement of 60 on the numbers available in the box pews and gallery that were swept away.
- The pews were not placed on platforms and rested on timber flooring between the tiled walkways. There appears to be no underfloor void in the nave and aisles.
- The chancel contained stalls for a choir and the communion rail was set on the step east of the door into the new vestry.
- A piscina was moved into the vestry and the only memorials in the church moved into the tower.

The first instrument to support music in the church was a harmonium bought in 1862 (Ellman 2006). This was subsequently replaced in 1880 by a pipe organ, which was located at the east end of the north aisle when the instrument was surveyed in 1946 (NPOR N15338). Restored in 1951, it was located under the tower arch when it was surveyed again in 1977 (NPOR 15339). A plan of the church in 1972 shows



*Left: East window of 1908 by Powell and Son commemorating Revd Edward Boys Ellman*

*Above: An early 20th-century photograph showing the church as it was before the Lady Chapel was created in 1934 (Courtesy: Church of England Record Centre)*

two organs in place, so the second organ was acquired in the middle of the 20th century (see 1.6).

#### 1.4 EARLY 20TH-CENTURY ALTERATIONS

Two important alterations occurred to affect the character of the church as Woodyer left it in 1856. Firstly in 1908, stained glass was installed in all the chancel windows and in the east window of the south aisle, introducing colour into the building (Blee 2016). The east window in the chancel, depicting Christ in Glory, commemorates Revd Ellman, who had been vicar of Berwick for sixty years. The other chancel windows commemorate his son-in-law Rev John Walker, who died in 1902, and depict St Richard of Chichester on the north and St Wilfred and St Dunstan on the south. Ellman's wife, Georgina is commemorated in the east window of the south aisle that depicts Dorcas and Phoebe. The windows were designed and made by James Powell & Son at Whitefriars in London. A plaque in the chancel records the details of the commemorative glass.

The second alteration was the creation of a Lady Chapel in 1934, commemorating Rev Albert Roe, to designs by The Craftsmen's Guild, based in Kennington, London. A fine design for the altar and its furnishings is to be seen in the West Sussex Record Office (EPII/35/22). The faculty included removal of three small seats holding nine people; a reredos was not permitted so as not to block the stained glass in the window. It seems likely however that the majority of the pews on the south side of the nave and in the south aisle were removed at the same time to be replaced with rush-seated chairs, some with a prayer book ledge and most with stretchers for the convenient storing of men's hats (see Cooper and Brown 2011, p.316). It also seems likely that the floor was

lifted and replaced with wood blocks leading to the loss of any 19th-century tiles that had previously formed a walkway along the south wall; this floor is in place in a 1972 photograph (held in the National Monuments Record) taken by John Gay before the installation of five new pews later the same year (see 1.6).

#### 1.5 1940s TRANSFORMATION

The circumstances leading to the decoration of the church by Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell and Quentin Bell between 1941 and 1944 are well documented (Blee 2016; Shone 1969; Watney 2007). The inspiration for the project came from Bishop George Bell, who wished to revive the tradition of fresco painting in Sussex churches as well as to provide opportunities for artists to exercise their creativity in a time of war. Some commentators have proposed that it was Duncan Grant who suggested Berwick to the bishop (e.g. Blee 2016); the artist certainly embraced the project with enthusiasm, master-minding it through the various stages, which were at times made difficult through parochial objections expressed through the faculty process.

Grant's original concept included murals in the nave and chancel, decoration of the roofs, masonry, screen and pulpit. The work was phased with Grant's proposed decoration of the roofs and masonry not being allowed. In the first, most contentious phase, 1941-43, the artists were able to complete the murals above the nave arcades and on both sides of the chancel arch. Through the interventions of Kenneth Clark, the so-called murals were painted directly onto plasterboard, in the event that the paintings should ever be removed to reverse their introduction into a restored medieval building. The tower wall panel, the





*Vanessa Bell's painting of The Annunciation on the south nave wall*



*Vanessa Bell's painting of The Nativity on the north nave wall*

chancel wall murals and decoration of the screen and pulpit formed Phase 2, 1943-44.

Not long after the completion of the second phase, flying bombs near to the church damaged it in the autumn of 1944. The damage certainly evidenced itself in the blowing out of the glass in the aisles; some contemporary photographs (held in the Church of England Record Centre) show that for a period the windows were probably boarded and covered in drapes before being replaced with clear plate glass as seen today. Miraculously, it would seem, the stained glass in the chancel and the east window of the south aisle survived the blast.

Clive Bell eloquently wrote about the first phase in *Country Life* in 1943. The article contains images that give an idea as to the appearance of the interior of the church when the artists worked on the commission. It is not clear whether the original 19th-century pews were in place, but if our inference is correct, they had already been removed in 1934. The Lady Chapel altar is visible in the photographs as well as the undecorated chancel, screen and pulpit. An anonymous article in *The Listener* dated 16 March 1944 positively echoed Clive Bell's view and fully supported Bishop Bell's initiative; what is more it is accompanied by a photograph sourced from *The Times*, confirming the existence of chairs on the south side of the nave.

The second phase of decoration introduced substantial changes to the chancel on the recommendation of Frederick Etchells, who had been a strong supporter of the artists. In a letter dated 18 October 1943 Etchells proposed to Rev Mitchell (West Sussex Record Office EP11/44/6):

*1. In view of dry rot under the floors of the existing deal choir seats, which at present crowd out the Chancel and which are not in use, opportunity [should] be taken to remove them & make good the flooring under in concrete and tiles to match the existing floor.*

*2. Opportunity [should be taken] to re-ar-*

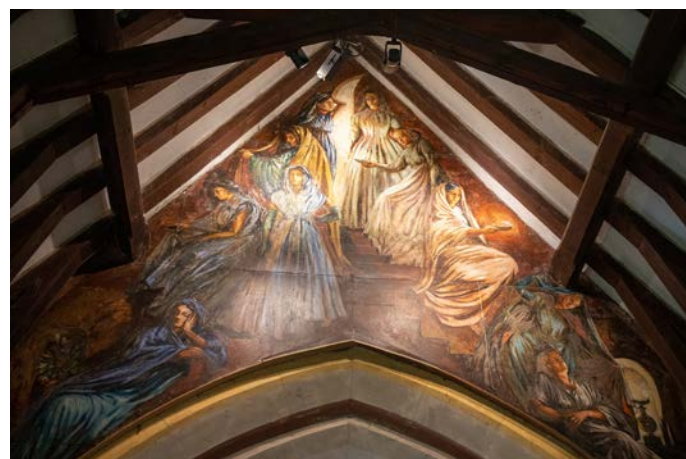
*range the steps in the chancel. Presently rises two steps the rails. Proposed to refit the rails further west & with only one step at this point. 2nd step unaffected.*

*3. Existing clergy seat & desk refixed and additional seat & desk to match on other side, made from existing choir seats, to a suitable design when circumstances permit.*

Etchells felt strongly that these were essential preliminary measures before the chancel screen was decorated. This decluttering, which was both practical and aesthetic, allowed the final elements of the decorative scheme to be read more easily. This means that the context in which the paintings were originally conceived was subtly altered.

Each of the three artists was responsible for different elements of the decoration. Duncan Grant painted "Christ in Glory" over the chancel arch as well as the west side of the chancel screen and the tower wall panel depicting "The Victory of Calvary". Vanessa Bell was responsible for "The Annunciation" on the south nave wall and "The Nativity" on the north. Vanessa also painted the panels on the pulpit, which originally depicted Saint Gabriel, Saint Raphael and Saint Michael as well as the still life arrangements of flowers within a curtained awning; the panels of the three saints were vandalised irreparably in 1962, and replaced with fresh still life paintings by Duncan Grant that are still in place. Quentin Bell was assigned the "Wise and Foolish Virgins" that adorn the east wall of the chancel arch, the east side of the chancel screen, the chancel frescoes and the "Supper at Emmaus", which for several years was used as the reredos above the chancel altar, thus blocking Woodyer's carved stone reredos.

The paintings have been a constant source of concern, due to the instability of the environment, with the result that various 'restorations' have taken place: in 1967 (Shone 1969), chancel frescoes in 1977 (faculty in West Sussex Record Office) and again in 1982



Left: Mr Weller, Mr Humphry and Douglas Hemming, who died at Caen in 1944, in Duncan Grant's painting above the chancel arch

Above: Quentin Bell's painting of the Wise and Foolish Virgins on the reverse wall of the chancel arch

when the panel of the "Wise and Foolish Virgins" was conserved (faculty in West Sussex Record Office). A major conservation project is currently underway.

## 1.6 LATE 20TH-CENTURY ALTERATIONS

Continuing damp problems as well as the techniques used by the artists have led to a number of alterations in the church since the completion of the paintings, incrementally altering the context within which the paintings were first installed and how they are seen today.

Electric lighting, in the form of rather inelegant strip lights, was introduced in 1947 (all relevant faculties are held in West Sussex Record Office). This was replaced in 1967 with a scheme of spotlights, which in turn has been upgraded.

Roof timbers were replaced in 1966 and the roofs renewed completely in 1980. A lightning strike in 1983 led to restoration of the tower while further roof repairs were necessitated by the great storm of 1987.

With the regular (quinquennial) inspection of churches covered by legislation from 1955, various repairs to the church have occurred following some of these inspections; for instance faculties exist for quinquennial repairs in 1971 and in 1990. Certainly one of the inspections may have provided the opportunity for the timber floor in the tower, which was noted in 1965 to be in poor condition and was replaced with tiles at a later date.

In 1972, a faculty was granted to install five new pews in the nave. These were deliberately intended to match the style and craftsmanship of the remaining pews on the north side of the nave and in the north

aisle. The architect's tender document bears quotation:

*I should be grateful if you would tender for the construction and fitting of five new pews and a front kneeling rail for this part of the church. The pews are to be constructed in pine which is to be finished in a manner as to provide the nearest match to the existing pews. Our Drawing No 418/2A indicates the positions of the new pews (and you will note one of the short pews has an extended kneeling rail). Our Drawing No 418/3 shows details of the pews, based on the existing ones. The construction of the existing pews is in places inferior and your tender should allow for a good standard of joinery work, but for an appearance to match the existing.*

While the joinery is very close to the original, it is interesting to note that the pine was not stained as darkly as in the 19th-century pews.

It has not been possible to track the history of the heating apparatus in the church, apart from the installation of tubular under-pew heaters that were installed as part of the faculty for the new pews in 1972. Based on visual evidence in old photographs, as there appears to be no void beneath the nave and aisle floors, floor-standing cast iron heating apparatus can be seen, which has at some stage been replaced with the convection heating currently in situ in addition to the under-pew heaters.

As noted in 1.3, by 1972 there were two organs in the church. In 1986 the newer organ was refurbished and in 1988 the old organ was donated to Alciston Church (within the benefice). The remaining organ

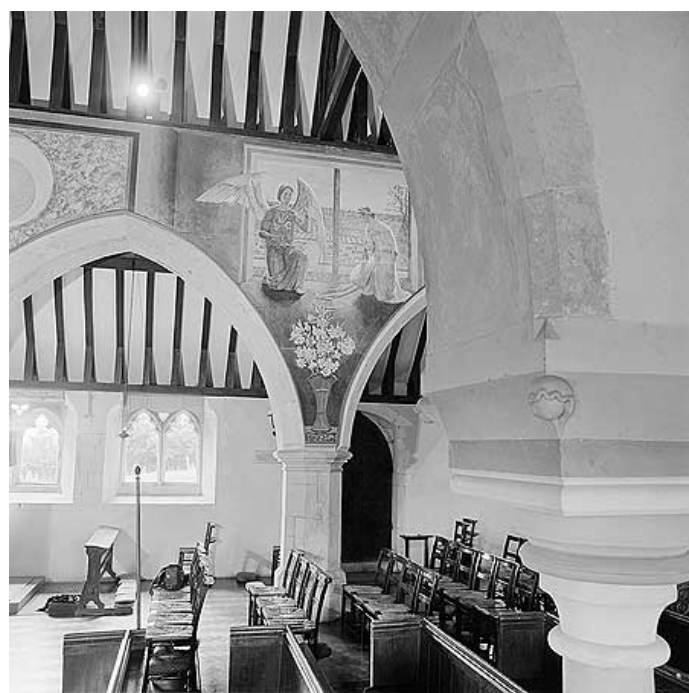




*View from the north door across the nave, showing the 1972 benches on the south side of the nave and the 2010 door into the south porch*

was placed in the tower; as the design included a timber screen to either side of the instrument, a condition of faculty was that the organ should be free-standing to allow interested persons to see the memorials that had been removed into the tower as part of the 19th-century restoration. This organ was removed after a faculty granted in 2018.

The most recent physical alteration has been the replacement of the outer gates and inner timber door in the south porch with the installation of new part-glazed doors in both openings in 2010, creating a more effective draught lobby and providing space for storage.



*View across the nave to the south aisle by John Gay 1972 (Courtesy of Historic England National Monuments Record)*

## 2 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Significance may be understood in terms of the following values:

- Archaeological Interest
- Historical Interest
- Architectural and Artistic Interest

In assessing significance, it is useful to have a clear scale of heritage values.

Criteria for Establishing Significance	
High	Exceptional - important at national to international levels (e.g. Grade I and II* buildings)
Moderate - High	Considerable - important at regional level or national levels (e.g. Grade II buildings)
Moderate	Some - usually of local value but of regional significance for group or other value
Low - Moderate	Local - of local value
Low	Little or Negative value - which adds little or nothing or actually detracts from the value of a site or area, for example a concrete boiler house

### 2.1 THE CHURCH

Out of 17 listed buildings in Berwick, the church is the only building rated at Grade 1. This, the highest level of listing, recognises the national importance and exceptional interest of the Church of St Michael



*Left: The medieval font in the angle between the respond of the south arcade and the tower wall*

*Right: 17th-century memorial to Revd John Nutt and his wife now located in the tower*



and All Angels; therefore the church has **high significance**. It was listed in 1966 after the vandalism of the pulpit and perhaps when the building and, more particularly, the artworks were considered vulnerable. Without the paintings, it is arguable whether the building would justify listing at such a high grade. The significance of the paintings is considered in 2.6; however suffice it to say here that the uniqueness of the contribution of the Bloomsbury artists to this small church is exceptional and like Charleston Farmhouse, is a testament to an important period of British painting.

All the other listed buildings in the village are rated Grade II. The deserted medieval settlement to the north of the house at Church Farm is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

## 2.2 MEDIEVAL FABRIC

The surviving medieval fabric on the exterior of the church has **high significance**: the chancel, the south aisle, south porch and tower. On the interior, the south arcade also has **high significance**. The easternmost window in the south wall of the south aisle may contain original medieval stonework and shows stylistic affinities with the 14th-century tomb in the chancel; it therefore also has **high significance**.

The font has **high significance**, although its date is uncertain and its style is undistinguished. Likewise the 14th-century tomb and wall canopy in the chancel have **high significance**.

## 2.3 POST-MEDIEVAL FABRIC AND FITTINGS

Nothing survives of the 17th- and 18th-century interior, except perhaps the tower arch. The three memorials in the tower all pre-date the 1856 restoration and

have **moderate-high significance** derived from their communal value. The memorial to John Nutt (d.1656) and his wife, emulates the best monumental sculpture of its period and has been attributed to John Stone.

## 2.4 19TH-CENTURY FABRIC AND FITTINGS

Henry Woodyer was an important if eclectic architect, whose oeuvre contains many fine new designs and examples of high quality restorations. His work at Berwick has remained true to the volume and massing of the original church and other Sussex types in the vicinity. He resisted any urge to raise the height of the nave roof to add a clerestory. Instead, in the absence of any gentry patronage to provide financial support, he worked with a budget that required improving drainage, roofs and damaged masonry to produce a sympathetic restoration. On its own the exterior and interior of the restored church might be worthy of a Grade II listing, possibly Grade II\*, and therefore has **moderate-high significance**.

Woodyer's style is most noticeable in the unusual window shapes and design in the north and south walls, the trussing of the roofs, the elaborate sedilia, the modest timber screen and the simple pews. Taken as a whole, these features have **moderate-high significance** for their craftsmanship and detailing.

## 2.5 20TH-CENTURY FABRIC AND FITTINGS

The stained glass in the chancel and the east window of the south aisle has **high significance** as fine examples of the work of J Powell and Sons.





View of Woodyer's reconstructed north aisle and porch



One of the memorial plaques on a 1972 bench

The Lady Chapel altar has **moderate-high significance** for artistic reasons as a good example of the work of The Craftsmen's Guild.

The five pews installed in 1972 have **moderate-high significance** on artistic grounds as well as for historical reasons, as four out of the five bear brass plaques commemorating members of the congregation including Rev Ellman's daughter, Maude, who worked tirelessly for the parish from when she was widowed in 1902 until her death in 1937.

The paintings are considered separately below.

## 2.6 PAINTINGS

The mural paintings and the decoration of the screen and pulpit have **high significance** for their historical interest as well as for artistic reasons.

The historical interest derives from the depictions of local people in the paintings, in particular in the "Christ in Glory" by Duncan Grant and in "The Nativity" painted by Vanessa Bell. The former, although painted during the Second World War, has assumed the function of being a war memorial with its depiction on the left of the chancel arch of a sailor, airman and soldier (Mr Weller. Mr Humphry and Douglas Hemming), all local men; Hemming, son of the local station master, died at Caen (Blee 2016). "Christ in Glory" also portrays Bishop Bell and Revd George Mitchell on the right of the chancel arch. The background to these recognisable figures evokes the local landscape, anchoring the images in the 20th-century rather than in an imagined landscape and adding to the **high significance** for historical reasons.

Vanessa Bell's paintings likewise use the Sussex landscape as a backdrop. "The Annunciation" uses the garden at Charleston in the background, while recognisable Sussex "emblems" are visible in "The Nativity", such as "the Pyecroft crook, the trug, and a black-nosed Southdown lamb" as enthusiastically described by Joseph Braddock (1954). Chattie Salaman, a friend of Angelica Bell, modelled for both Grant and Vanes-

sa Bell, appearing as the angels surrounding "Christ in Glory" and also as the Angel Gabriel in "The Annunciation". In both "The Annunciation" and "The Nativity" Angelica Bell was the model for Mary. Quentin Bell also features in "The Nativity" alongside other real models connected with Charleston and Firle. It is notable that the 1969 Christmas issue of Country Life chose to feature "The Nativity" as its token seasonal image; although the caption is not more informative, it is worth speculating whether the choice may have been inspired the exhibition devoted to the paintings held earlier in the year at the Towner Gallery in Eastbourne (Shone 1969). These details confirm the **high significance** of these paintings for historical reasons.

Both Salaman and Angelica Bell modelled for Quentin Bell's depiction of "The Wise and Foolish Virgins". The Sussex landscape is celebrated in Quentin Bell's "Supper at Emmaus", where the model for Christ was Leonard Woolf, his uncle, and the disciples were modelled by unidentified members of the Australian Air Force, who happened to be billeted near Charleston. For these historical reasons Quentin Bell's paintings have **high significance**.

Evocations of the Sussex countryside appear in both Duncan Grant's and Quentin Bell's decoration of the chancel screen. Facing the nave, Grant painted the four seasons flanking the door, with Day and Night on the doors, while Quentin Bell depicted the Sacraments, sometimes known as "The Cycle of Life" in the corresponding panels on the reverse, with confession and communion on the doors. While models do not appear to have been identified, the paintings have **high significance** for their placing of the subject matter in a well understood landscape, familiar to both the artists and the congregation.

"The Victory of Calvary" by Grant has **high significance** for its artistic qualities and for historical reasons. The model is reputed to be Edward Le Bas, a fellow artist, with whom, not long after the completion of the cycle of paintings at Berwick, Grant and Bell went on a painting trip to Dieppe in 1946. Le Bas



*A Southdown lamb and Sussex trug in Vanessa Bell's "The Nativity"*

was a noted collector of Grant's paintings as well as works by the Camden Town Group.

As works of art the paintings have **high significance** and therefore are of exceptional importance at both national and international levels. Just as Charleston Farmhouse, the home of Duncan Grant for over sixty years and of Vanessa Bell for almost fifty years, captures the ethos of the Bloomsbury Group's approach to interior decoration during their lives, so the murals at St Michael and All Angels at Berwick capture a moment in time that expresses Christian truths in a unique and powerful manner. The listing of the church in 1966, the exhibition in Eastbourne in 1969 and the commitment of the parish to the conservation of and dissemination of information about the paintings all emphasise their **high significance**.

## 2.7 THE SETTING

The church is romantically set in the lee of the South Downs between Lewes and Eastbourne, the hills at this point sometimes being described as whale-backed (Braddock 1954). The tall trees within and around the perimeter of the churchyard obscure the modest splayed-foot spire in high summer. The church was built at the top of a small eminence, as befits its dedication, and on the eastern and southern edges of the churchyard, there are broad views across to The Rails and Bostal Hill as well as to Alciston to the east. The elevated position of the church within its churchyard has **high significance** arising from the Grade I listing for the building and its curtilage.

The mound on the southwest side of the churchyard may be a barrow or a motte. The possibility of the mound being a barrow would be supported by the presence of several tumuli at the top of the Downs along this stretch. However a defensive motte might be consistent with the deserted medieval settlement to the north of the present village. Whatever the purpose of the mound, the use of its summit as a place



*Grant's decoration of the chancel screen with images of the seasons either side of the doors which show day and night*

for the village war memorial accords it **high significance**.

There are no listed memorials in the churchyard, although there is a fine chest tomb situated beneath the window on the north side of the chancel. A memorial to an 18th-century member of the Elphick family, the tomb is shown in the c.1850 watercolour in the church and was carefully avoided in the building of a new vestry in 1856. Ellman (2006) warmly talks about the members of the Elphick family, possible descendants of the Elphick thus commemorated, who were his servants on taking up his incumbency. Despite the lack of listings, the burials within the churchyard have **high significance** for historical and archaeological reasons connected to the history of the village and its community.



## 2.8 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

St Michael and All Angels at Berwick has **high significance**. It is Grade I listed, meaning that its significance is exceptional both nationally and internationally. This high level of designation derives to a large extent from the murals and other decorations executed during the Second World War by members of the Bloomsbury Group. The paintings are a vibrant testimony of the vision of Bishop Bell of Chichester for enhancing Sussex churches and of his willingness to embrace contemporary artistic styles rather than derivative imitations. The paintings revisit Christian themes in a colourful modern style, that at the same time anchors them in the history of the village and its nearby communities during a time of national insecurity. The use of recognisable people, Sussex landscapes and “emblems” increases their significance for posterity as a record of the period.

Without the paintings it is arguable whether the church would be listed so highly. Woodyer’s restoration is competent and excels mostly in not altering the building beyond recognition; its character is enhanced and easily recognisable as a familiar Sussex type. The surviving medieval work has **high significance**.

## 3 CONSERVATION ISSUES

This section is under development.

## 4 CONSERVATION POLICIES

This section is under development.

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