

## Statement of Significance

### Section 1: The church in its urban / rural environment.

#### 1.1 Setting of the Church

Chedzoy is a working village situated about 10 minutes from Bridgwater and 5 minutes from Junction 23 of the M5. The village is on a bus route, although services are somewhat infrequent. The village was historically a strong farming community and there are still farms on the outskirts. However, nowadays most people's occupations take them to work in Bridgwater, Taunton or further afield. Village properties are mixed with cottages, local council housing and private houses of different sizes and ages.

St. Mary's Church is a Grade 1 listed building set in a large and well maintained church yard. It is located towards the eastern end of the village.

Throughout its long history Chedzoy church has had many patrons including King Henry VII, King Henry VIII and the Earls of Salisbury and Pembroke. It was once the property of the Order of St John of Jerusalem at Mynchin Buckland, Somerset.

It started as a dependent chapel of North Petherton – a large village some six miles away. Temporary burial rights were granted to the chapel in the 1140s during the civil war. In 1166 it was given to Buckland Priory in Lower Durston. By the early 13th century the church had become independent and by 1343 had been dedicated to St. Mary.

The church is quiet and peaceful and villagers often visit for prayer or contemplation or simply to get away from the troubles of modern life.

The church motto is '*A haven of peace at the heart of the community*'.

#### 1.2 The Living Churchyard

The churchyard is roughly rectangular in shape and is open for burials. It is bounded by lias walls to the west and north. There is a brick wall to a residential property and hedge to the east. Low lias walls remain to the south with a cottage forming part of the boundary.

There are several yew trees in the churchyard, but the dominant tree is a magnificent beech in the northern part of the churchyard estimated to be over 300 years old.

At the main entrance there is a pair of cast iron gates with adjacent lych gate and overthrow with lantern which was erected in 1983. There is parking for two cars immediately outside the gates. Two public footpaths run through the churchyard.

The churchyard contains an interesting variety of older and modern memorials.

Adjacent to the west face of the tower there is a statue to Sydney Mason Collins. He was a wealthy man whose ancestors came from Chedzoy. He died in 1946 and was buried in the churchyard. As well as serving as a soldier he was a barrister, a fellow of Corpus Christi College and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquities. In 1950 a bronze equestrian statue was

erected on his grave. The statue, designed and produced by Cecil Thomas FRBS, depicted him dressed as a Captain in the Royal Engineers at the time of the First World War. The statue was stolen overnight in 2006 and never recovered. In 2018 the Village Hall Trustees offered to reinstate the statue. This offer was gratefully accepted and a replica was commissioned from sculptor Richard Austin who lives in Wadebridge, Cornwall. In June 2020 the replica statue was installed. It is sculpted from 'Antius Bronze', a material which looks like bronze, is as strong as foundry bronze but has no scrap metal value.

The churchyard contains two war graves. One is that of Pt. Edwin A. Chappell who died in 1900 at the Battle of Modder River during the Second Boer War. The other is Pt. Walter S. Radford who died from wounds in 1918 during The Great War.

On the north side of the churchyard there are two rare tumble-gates to keep animals out. From a distance the gates appear to be a section of fencing, but closer examination shows that one post has been cut into 'V'-shaped wedges. Pushing down on the top rail at the point nearest to the uncut post allows pedestrian access.

### **1.3 Social History**

As previously mentioned, Chedzoy church has had many patrons including King Henry VII, King Henry VIII and the Earls of Salisbury and Pembroke. It was once the property of the Order of St John of Jerusalem at Mynchin Buckland, Somerset.

The value of the living and the prominence of the patrons attracted distinguished and absentee rectors. Godfrey Giffard (rector in the mid 13th century) later became Bishop of Worcester 1268-1302. Thomas de Montagu (rector by 1391) was also Dean of Salisbury. John Welles (rector from 1415) died at the Council of Constance in 1417. Nicholas Upton (rector 1427-1434) wrote a book on heraldry and knighthood. Thomas Northwich (rector 1470-1487) was also prior of Eye. Christopher Urswick (rector 1487-1488) was a scholar, courtier and diplomat. Richard Nykke (rector 1489-1501) was bishop of Norwich 1501-1536. Nicholas Mason (rector from 1547) was deprived in 1554 but would not leave. George Montgomery (rector 1596-1619) spent some time in Ireland from 1609 where he was Bishop of Clogher and of Meath.

During the English Civil War, Lord Fairfax made Chedzoy his headquarters during the siege of Bridgwater in 1645. Six regiments of the Parliamentary army encamped at Chedzoy. The rectory house was plundered and Walter Raleigh (rector 1620-1646 and dean of Wells 1642-1646) was deprived on account of his support of Charles I. He was imprisoned and subsequently murdered by the gaol keeper at Wells.

The most famous event in the church's history was the Battle of Sedgemoor on 6th July 1685 when the Duke of Monmouth led his 'Pitchfork Rebellion' on a midnight raid on the Royal Army at Westonzoyland. The Duke was attempting to seize the throne of England after the death of his father. The rebels marched across the moor close to Chedzoy and are said to have heard the church clock strike the hour as they passed. A patrol of Horse Guards stood in the village street through the night before the battle. The rector of Chedzoy, Revd. Andrew Paschall (later Chancellor and Canon of Wells Cathedral) wrote an interesting account of the rebellion.

## 1.4 The church building in general

*Source: Quinquennial Inspection Report 2021*

Anglican parish church. C13, C14, C15, C16, restored 1884-85 probably by William Butterfield. Coursed and squared rubble, freestone dressings, tile and lead-sheeting roofs, crested ridges, copings to verges with cruciform finials. Nave with clerestory, north and south aisles, south porch, north and south transepts, chancel, north vestry, west tower. Predominantly Perpendicular, high 3-stage tower of Quantock type, set-back buttresses which end in long shafts of former pinnacles, string below parapet with gargoyles, embattled parapet with blank quatrefoil banding, corner pinnacles, paired 2-light bell-chamber openings with tracery, louvres, flanking shafts with pinnacles; similar single windows on ringing chamber stage below, that to south with inset clock face, polygonal stair turret on north side, tall 4-light west window with 2 sub-arches, below door opening with a 4-centred arch head, foliate spandrels, paired ribbed doors. Five-bay nave, clerestory with 3-light square-headed windows. Three-bay south aisle, small 2-light square-head window and a 2-light traceried pointed head-window, square-headed west window with tracery, buttresses, parapet. This parapet continues around south porch, cruciform finial, door opening with a chamfered head to segmental pointed arch, over a freestone panel with initials R.B. (Abbot R. Beere of Glastonbury (1493-1524), R.F., an heraldic shield with a Wyvern, and also date 1579; interior benched on a flagstone floor, late C13 inner doorway with fine C16 door, ribbed and studded with lozenge decoration. Three bay north aisle, narrower than the south, square-headed 2 and 3-light windows with tracery, north doorway with plank door, scrolly C15 ironwork; parapet, buttresses. Single-bay transepts with shallow gables, parapets, large 4-light windows. Chancel rebuilt in facsimile, late C13, though incorporates some medieval work; 2 bays, north lancets with pointed trefoiled rere-arches; south window of 2-lights with Y-tracery and broad trefoiled rere-arch, also a 3 light Perpendicular window with label, square head; large 4-light Perpendicular east window. On south side of chancel traces of a former chapel, circular pier with 4 attached shafts and the chamfered arches of 2 bays, on the east wall of the south transept the remains of 2 large circular piers and an arch. Interior plastered on flagstone floors, encaustic pavement to chancel. Good, moulded tie-beam roof to nave, panelled lean-to roofs to aisles, wagon roof to chancel with a carved wall-plate with bosses, gilded decoration. Restored C13 5-bay aisle arcades, circular piers, moulded caps, double-chamfered arches. Panelled Perpendicular tower arch; panelled arches to transepts. In north transept an inserted Elizabethan arch with leaf decoration, calvary above, probably a former entrance to a chantry. C13 style sedilia. Perpendicular stoup. Octagonal font, Early English. Upper and lower entrances to rood. Good medieval chest. Full set of benches with carved ends, broad tracery, geometrical patterns, leaf motifs and on one the monogram of Queen Mary (1554-59); some C17 benches, Elizabethan pulpit with linenfold panelling. Jacobean lectern, altar rails, altar table, chair and organ seat made up of re-used panels. C18 kneeler with turned balusters. Hatchment. Brass in nave to Richard Sydenham in armour, c1490. C18 wall monuments. High Gothic fittings associated with 1884 rebuild including candelabra, rood screen (which may incorporate medieval remains), organ, reredos, altar rails, choir stalls, and stained glass. Further stained-glass window of 1908, probably by Morris and Co. Grooves on south buttresses are said to have been made by Monmouth's army sharpening their weapons prior to the Battle of Sedgemoor. The church was recorded in 1843 as being rendered externally; a western gallery (incorporating ancient wood carving) is described under the tower, whilst the south transept is noted as containing a chantry with square headed

windows. (Pevsner, N. Buildings of England, South and West Somerset, 1958; SANHS Proceedings 29 36; Church guide anon, no date).

### **1.5 The church building in detail**

The church is a Grade 1 listed building.

The nave has a clerestory with north and south aisles and transepts. There is a curious 15th century arch in the north aisle surmounted by a defaced Calvary. This was probably the entrance to a chantry which was destroyed at the time of the Reformation. The massive, circular nave pillars are in the 13th century Early English style of Gothic architecture. The south wall is thought to be 13th century, the north wall is 15th century. The small north door carries good examples of 15th century metalwork with its ancient bands and hinges of hammered iron.

Most of the windows in the nave are in the 15th century Perpendicular style, with the characteristic tracery of that period, but a smaller window is of earlier date. All the windows on the north side of the nave are square-headed.

By the 1880s the chancel was virtually derelict and a report states “the walls are on an average eleven or twelve inches out of upright and very loose and shaky, and the roof timbers are quite decayed, it would be absolutely necessary to pull down and reconstruct.” It was demolished and rebuilt in 1884 and 1885 at a cost of £2,000, all of which was paid by the Rector, Revd. G. Mullens. At the same time a vestry was added to the north east. A basement was also dug under the vestry and north transept to house the central heating boiler (no longer functioning). Funds of £800 were raised by the churchwardens and used on restoration work in the nave. The nave roof was raised and tiled in 1905.

The tower is a fine example of the famous Somerset church towers. It has double-light belfry windows (Quantock class) as opposed to triple-light windows (Mendip class). In 1539 Thomas Harburfield of Chedzoy left a bequest of £3 towards “the bildinge of the Towre of Chardseye” so the tower is dated to around that period. The rails beneath the tower are 17th century. It is thought that they were originally in front of the altar.

On the south side of the chancel is a hagioscope. This deep ‘squint’ was cut to allow the congregation in the south transept to come forward at the right moment and behold the elevation of the host during the mass. The squint is connected with the small blocked-up window, which can be seen from outside the church in the wall of the south transept. Parishioners who were not permitted to enter the church would stand in the churchyard and peer through this small window, then through the squint, to witness the elevation of the host. However, the position of the blocked window and the squint would seem to make this process rather difficult.

The porch in the south wall is of note on account of the sundial and the curious panel over the doorway. On the right in beautiful Gothic lettering are the initials ‘RB’, representing Richard Beere, the penultimate Abbot of Glastonbury and one of the most famous. ‘RF’ stands for Richard Fox, Bishop of Winchester and Lord of the Manor of Taunton. The most curious part of the panel is the wyvern standing over what is believed to be a weaver’s comb, with leather hoops on the shafts, through which the hands could be passed. The

wyvern was the badge of the Pembroke family and the 'HP' on the badge represents a member of this family or, possibly, the Revd. Hugo Pole, who was rector of Chedzoy in 1523.

There are five consecration crosses on the exterior walls - two on the south side and three on the north.

The buttresses outside the south transept carry deep indentations, which are popularly supposed to be the marks of sharpening scythes or other weapons by the Monmouth rebels before the Battle of Sedgemoor. However, the story is probably a myth as no Chedzoy man enlisted in the rebel army. The rector at the time, the Revd. Andrew Paschall, persuaded his parishioners to keep clear of the Western Rebellion.

On the south side of the chancel exterior may be seen the remains of a chapel in the Early English style of the 13th century.

### **1.6 Contents of the Church**

Inside the church the brass on the floor by the south entrance depicts Richard Sydenham of Chedzoy, wearing the armour of the late 15th century. He left a piece of land to the church to be sold by auction every 21 years. The auction takes place while a half inch of candle burns and the last bid before the flame dies is the successful one. This custom is still carried out today and the last Candle Auction was held in 2010.

The north transept houses the organ (recently restored), which was installed in 1902. It was originally pumped by hand and the old handle can still be seen on the right-hand side of the organ. The organ was built by W G Vowles, of Bristol. It replaced what was described in the Church Property Register of that time as an American Harmonium. An electric blower was installed in 1952. The oak screen surrounding the organ seat is dated 1620 and bears the initials "GM" for George Montgomery who left as rector in 1620.

The ancient oak chest dates from the 15th century and was used to hold the parish registers. The lectern, dated 1618, is built in the Jacobean style. The carving on the pulpit is 15th century *liner work* giving an appearance like folded linen. The font was re-cut in the 15th century.

There are some very fine bench ends, more deeply cut than is usual and individually carved in oak. Dr Todd Gray, from Exeter University, has visited the church and said these are some of the finest bench ends in Somerset.

The bell chamber in the tower contains a peal of six bells. The oldest bell dates from around 1550. Other bells date from 1613 (but recast in 1925), 1659, 1790 (also recast in 1925), 1840 and 1887 (given to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee).

All of the bells have inscriptions:-

1550 'Ave Maria Plena Gratia Ora Pro Nobis' (translates as 'Hail Mary Full of Grace pray for us')

1613 'RP Drawe Neare to God'

1659 'GB x EP x TB x PW'

1790 'John Phillips, Joel Crane, Churchwardens'

1840 'Thomas Mears, founder, London 1840'

1887 'Given AD 1887 by Edward Derrick and Elizabeth his wife. A thanks offering to God for his blessings in their family for many years. Casted by Llewellins and James, Bristol'

The octagonal bell frame is of oak and bears the initials ESR and the date 1760, which from its general design and appearance is likely to be the year of its construction.

The ringing chamber houses the clock mechanism which is by Thomas Bayley of Bridgwater and is dated 1762. For the first 122 years of its life the clock simply chimed the hour. However, in 1884 it was restored and a dial fitted with the money raised from the 1883 Candle Auction.

Two of the altar frontals are fine examples of elaborate 15th century embroidery, English or possibly Flemish. They originally formed part of a cope found hidden in a box beneath the pulpit and were adapted into altar frontals by the Sisters of St Mary's Home, Wantage. Sadly only one remains as the other was stolen on Christmas Eve in 2002.

### **1.7 Significance for mission**

The church has played a key role as a place of worship since it was built. The PCC and congregation are in favour of developing the Church to meet the needs of the 21st century, while maintaining its primary function as a place of worship. The internal layout and ancient pews are very restrictive and not conducive to a more flexible use. However, the church is used for 'one-off' events such as exhibitions for crafts, quilting, flowers, photography, village history etc. We have also held cream teas and, of course, we offer refreshments after many of our services. We have early plans to install a 'green' heating system to the church building, as well as a kitchen/toilet extension. The church space must evolve if it is to continue to be a place of worship and activity in the future, but the recently updated Village Hall is the obvious place for social activities.

## **Section 2 : The significance of the area affected by the proposal.**

### **2.1 Identify the parts of the church and/or churchyard which will be directly or indirectly affected by your proposal.**

The south transept and our 'Easter Window' will be most affected. The window itself is our finest and most impressive and depicts the empty tomb and an angel telling five women that Jesus is no longer in the tomb. The window commemorates Elizabeth Frances Dunlap who died in 1908. Two photographs have been uploaded. The window is described in our Church Property Register as follows:

#### **South Transept (South Wall) – The Easter Window**

A large, pointed 4–light window. 4 pointed trefoiled headed lights and multiple traceries (7 major, 10 minor). Place names and emblems are depicted in the major traceries.

#### **Subject:**

The empty tomb - an angel tells 5 women (including 3 haloed women) that Jesus is no longer in the tomb.

**Major Traceries:**

- 1 - Pergamos - Sword
- 2- Thyatira - Sevenfold Flame
- 3 - Laodica - Α (Alpha) and Ω (Omega) on either side of a lighted candle.
- 4 - Ephesus - 7 branched candlestick
- 5 - Smyrna - Crown
- 6 - Sardis - Book with 7 seals
- 7 - Philadelphia - crossed keys

**Inscription:**

At the top of the panel are angels carrying a banner bearing an inscription

Panel 1 - He is

Panel 2 - not here he

Panel 3 - is risen as

Panel 4 - he said

**Dedication:**

Panel 1 - To the glory of God and in

Panel 2 - loving memory of Elizabeth

Panel 3 - Frances Dunlap who entered

Panel 4 - into rest 10 Feb 1908

**Below the Dedication:**

Symbols of the Passion of Christ

Panel 1 - Crown of Thorns

Panel 2 - 3 nails

Panel 3 - hammer and pincers

Panel 4 – Tunic

**Maker's Mark:**

No visible maker's mark.

Due to the ingress of water the south transept, housing our Lady Altar and the Children's Corner, have become a little damp and musty. Some redecoration and replastering is needed.

In addition to the crack above the window the masonry exterior of the south transept also requires significant work.

**2.2 Set out the significance of these particular parts.**

The south transept is one of the few areas in the church which has open space unobstructed by church furniture. The Lady Altar is used during the winter for communion and the Children's Area is popular with children during some services. At present the area looks slightly run down due to water ingress and damp. The proposed plastering/repainting will make a significant difference.

### **Section 3: Assessment of the impact of the proposals**

#### **3.1 Describe and assess the impact of your proposal on these parts, and on the whole.**

This proposal will ensure the future stability of both the south transept as a whole and our 'Easter Window'.

#### **3.2 Explain how you intend, where possible, to mitigate the impact of the proposed works on the significance of the parts affected and the whole.**

There will be no negative impact. The positive impact will be to stop rainwater ingress, ensure the stability and safety of the 'Easter Window', enhance the appearance of the interior of the south transept and allow us to expand our Children's Corner.