

All Saints Trull (Taunton)

Statement of Significance

Section 1: Brief history and history and description of the church buildings(s), contents, churchyard and setting:



HISTORY

There were earlier churches on the site but the tower is all that survives from a C13 church. Trull became a full parish by 1539 and this change in status was probably the spur to its rebuilding and the great refurnishing campaigns that have made it so famous. Trull church is fortunate in having rare and early documentation that throws light on the changes made to the seating arrangements between the C16 and C19 centuries. The seating plan of 1569 may be the earliest document of its sort that survives.

Documents and C19 illustrations indicate that extensive sets of box pews were introduced in the C18 and C19 in the south side of the nave and south aisle. Today, the internal character of the church is medieval and comprises medieval features that mostly belong to it, but is in practice the result of the archaeologically careful and sensitive restoration of 1856-63 by C. E. Giles, which involved the removal of post-medieval features like the box pews.

In the 1860s the decision was made to re-create the medieval interior as close to its original arrangement as possible, although there had been attempts to remove the pulpit. Considerable sums were expended but the details are not clear from the faculty of 1863. The new benches which were added suitably 'antiqued', the screens were restored and the pulpit was re-erected and its setting adorned with various pieces of medieval carved woodwork. The tester visible in old drawings was removed. A window above the tympanum beam, drawn by Tovey, was blocked and plastered over; it

is not clear whether this was a medieval feature or a later insertion. The medieval glass was restored and new pieces inserted in the old style by Clayton & Bell. The 1863 work is of national importance as a well-documented restoration and in part reconstruction of a complete late-medieval small parish church interior. Further restoration took place in 1890 and the early C20.

DESCRIPTION

MATERIALS: Red sandstone and blue lias random rubble throughout; Ham Hill stone dressings; Welsh slate roofs.

PLAN: Parish church consisting of west tower, nave, chancel, north and south aisles to nave and chancel, principal porch to south, another shallow porch to north, north-east vestry.

EXTERIOR: The tower is C13 with quite an ambitious west window of three stepped lancets that looks original in part; the triple-chamfered arch died into the imposts. Belfry openings are from the late medieval period along with a stair turret crenellated to match the parapet of the south aisle. Most of the window tracery is C19 but comparison with Buckler's view of the church of 1832 and Wheatley's of 1848 suggests this work was carried out faithfully. Cusped tracery, where it appears, adorns former chantry chapels (e.g., to the north of the chancel) and the show front to the south. Most of the windows to the north side are un-cusped, and this suggests a late date, probably early C16.

BELOW GROUND: there is potential for below-ground archaeology relating to earlier churches on the site and for evidence of the building phases the present church has undergone. There will also be intra-mural burials, most likely of prominent parishioners and incumbents. The area beneath the church, and in its immediate vicinity, is thus of particular sensitivity.

INTERIOR: the wagon roofs to nave and the framed and panelled ceilings to aisles and bell chamber are medieval. The arcades of the north and south aisles differ in their details but are so similar as to be part of the same late-medieval expansion programme. There are a number of C17 floor slabs.

FIXTURES & FITTINGS: The medieval fittings are of exceptional importance both intrinsically and by virtue of their rarity as an ensemble.

The elaborate wooden pulpit retains undamaged figures of saints in the principal panels (St James the Evangelist and the four great doctors of the western church, SS Gregory, Augustine of Hippo, Jerome and Ambrose) that most authorities consider to be integral. Smaller angels support the canopies and have been defaced (some repaired with lead faces). The main figures may be dated on stylistic grounds to the first quarter of the C16 and, if in situ, must have been removed for safekeeping at the time of the Reformation. The pulpit is generally regarded as one of the most important in the country.

There are five screens in all. The rood screen, to nave only, has lost its mullions and open-work tracery but the traceried dado, the ribbed coving and richly carved cornice survive. The original rood screen never extended across the entire width of the church (as is normally the case). Access to it must have been via a ladder. The aisle and parclose screens are very similar in character with linenfold dados that retain much of their colour. They are likely to date from c1525 (the date of the death of Thomas Keene who is commemorated in an inscription). The linenfold to the north chapel parclose is (as Pevsner pointed out) more finely laid than the others. The remains of a timber tympanum above the former rood, an exceptionally rare feature, are c1500-60. A moulded beam above the rood screen would have helped support the rood figures and may have supported a representation of the Day of Judgement.



Nave (east end), Rood Screens, Pulpit & Chancel

The richly carved bench ends are considered to be among the most important in Somerset. They display a range of patterns including some renaissance motifs such as vases and head profiles that suggest a date of c1530-40 (although a group with linenfold at the west end are later, dated 1560, and bear the names of the carver (Simon Warman) and parish clerk (John Waye). A number of bench ends, not now in their original sequence, illustrates individuals taking part in a procession (a cross bearer, a torch bearer, a man in orders holding a reliquary or chrismatory, another man in orders

dressed in a surplice possibly a deacon, and a parson). The importance of this group has long been recognised but there are two schools of thought as to its meaning. One considers the figures to be a straight-forward representation of a church ceremonial. The other considers them to be a caricature rather than naïve work that ridicules pre-Reformation ritual. The key to interpreting the group is one of dating: the costumes could be Elizabethan when the use of holy water (not represented in the scenes) had been given up: this, if correct, would favour caricature.



Bench Ends

Some of the benches are complete and in situ. McDermott's careful research has identified which these are (reference is given on RE11; the detailed seating plan is at p.126). They are situated to the west of the nave and both aisles and to the block situated between the nave and north aisle forward of the cross passage. Other areas are composed of C16 bench ends attached to 1863 benches and benches that are entirely of that later date. This plan and its supporting text is the key document in understanding the sequence and relative importance of the Trull benches. In situ benches of this date are rare. While the C19 benches are of less intrinsic interest, the fact that they were installed to complement the originals as part of a concerted plan to recreate a medieval interior gives them particular significance in this context.

GLASS: Much glass of c1500 survives in the east and south chancel windows. The east window shows the crucifixion in the central light with St John and the BVM to either side. The latter were in situ and substantially intact when Clayton & Bell restored the glass in 1863; the central light was reconstructed on the basis of inference and some fragments that were incorporated. The three-light south window held the figures of SS Michael and George (both slaying dragons); these were restored and a third dragon-slaying Saint (Margaret) introduced making use of fragments found elsewhere in the church and much new glass. The glazing scheme is an important example of mid-Victorian glass restoration. Some of the glazing is of this period but most is later than this and includes two striking

windows by Kempe (in the north aisle, north-west, 1899) and Kempe & Tower (north aisle, west).

MONUMENTS: There are two noteworthy monuments: one (south cancel chapel) a painted alabaster tablet set in the angle between south and east walls under a pediment and flanked by terms (half figures) with a naïve representation of an altar table covered with drapery (to John Baker, d. 1677); the other a marble aedicule (a tablet flanked with pilasters with both moulded base and pediment) with an armorial achievement to Robert Lucas (d.1722). There are also some C18 and early C19 wall tablets including one to Lt Col David Smith (d.1818) by the Taunton firm of Long.



South Chancel Chapel

CHURCHYARD and SETTING: The church is set in the south-eastern corner of its surrounding churchyard, the boundaries of which are bordered by: Church Lane (south), Wild Oak Lane (west

partial), Mill Lane (east partial). The remainder of the churchyard boundary is adjacent to residential properties. Beyond the NW limits of the churchyard lies the Chantry Cottage which once belonged to the church and is a listed building in its own right. Stone walls designate the limits of the boundaries, except along Wild Oak Lane where iron railings are also utilised. There is a war memorial in the south-western corner of the churchyard. In recent times the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has erected an appropriate placard on the churchyard railings. The Churchyard contains a number of yew trees and at least one walnut tree and lies within a Conservation Area. The remains of some old stocks are close adjacent to one of the yew trees. The Church tower can be clearly seen from Cotlake Hill, which lies to the west of Trull.

Section 2: The Significance of the church (including its contents and Churchyard) in terms of:

- i) Its special architectural and historical interest**
- ii) Any significant feature of artistic or archaeological interest**

Please state if you have taken expert advice to help define the significance, and from whom.

With reference to the comments in Section 1:

i) The pulpit is regarded as one of the most important in the country and possibly dates to C16. It may have been hidden during the reformation.

ii) Parts of the rood screen are of particular significance. The linenfold to the north chapel parclose is more finely laid than the others. The remains of a timber tympanum above the former rood, is an exceptionally rare feature.

iii) The bench ends of some of pews are dated C1530-40 and are considered some of the most important in Somerset.

iv) With respect to Glass, the east and south chancel windows are C1500.

v) Monuments: two are noteworthy, in the south chancel chapel to John Baker d 1677. Another to Robert Lucas d 1722.

vi) The church structure is of considerable significance, with the tower dating to C13. Trull became a full parish in 1539 and this may have been the spur to extensive works on the building. Rare documentation gives significant details about the seating arrangements between the C16 and C19 centuries. The internal character of the church is medieval with significant features. In the 1860s work was done to re-create the medieval interior and the 1863 work is considered to be of national importance. This work is well documented.

Sources: *Church Building* - primarily Mark Richmond Architects. *Churchyard description* – through observation (Peter Chew), and through reference to Somerset West & Taunton local authority (Conservation Records).

Section 3: Assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance defined in Section 2

All Saints Trull is a noteworthy building of considerable historic significance, which attracts visitors who are interested in its features. The primary purpose of the church is to be used as a place of worship and as a place where the community is welcomed to use for the occasional; offices (weddings, baptisms and funerals). The proposal will have little or no impact on the significant features within the church. It could be argued that the proposed re-lighting will have a positive impact on the appreciation of the historically significant features.

For good order we describe below the areas affected and the impact of the current proposals.

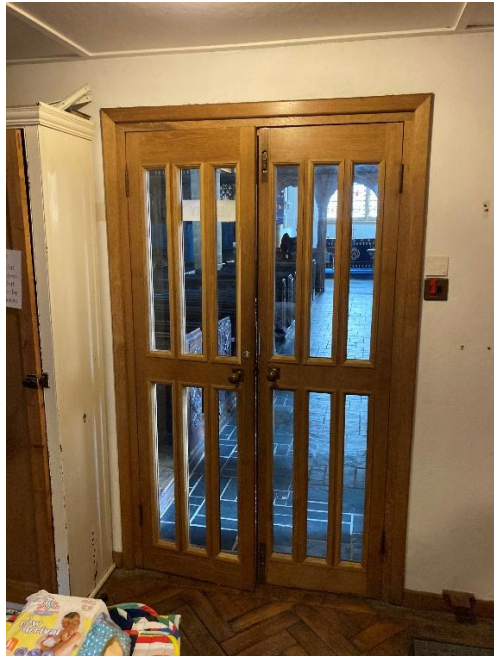
THE MAIN BODY OF THE CHURCH: The proposal to renew both the power and lighting circuits will have some limited impact on the interior of the church. All new cable routes have been carefully considered to minimise both their visual appearance and damage to historic fabric. The new lighting scheme will positively enhance the interior of the church and has been designed to accentuate significant features within the church. The plaster repairs and re-decoration will greatly enhance the church.

THE CHOIR VESTRY: The existing space in the tower base is largely unremarkable dating largely from 1890. The parquet flooring (currently covered over) would simply be roved as part of this proposal and replaced with a blue Lias paved floor, matching that in the chancel and south chapel, which will serve as a more practical surface in the proposed WC. The floor has to be lowered in order to form a level DDA compliant access from the Nave.



Choir Vestry

The Wainscot boarding and clock weight enclosures (Now redundant) date from 1904. The oak joinery is simple in design but of good quality. The clock weight enclosures are also a feature in the southwest and northwest corners of the ringing balcony directly above. The creation of a DDA compliant WC in the Choir Vestry requires them to be removed. The proposal would see the wainscot and boarding re-purposed within the reduced Choir Vestry/Family Room. The wainscot fitted in its entirety against the south wall to protect the plastered finishes behind the sofa. The clock weight enclosure boarding will be used to form the frontage of a new Altar Frontal Cabinet as a 'mirror' of the wainscot on the north wall.



Choir Vestry Doors

The choir vestry doors date from 1960 and originally featured solid timber panels, these were then replaced with glass under faculty approval in 2017. The doors are good quality oak joinery. The re-ordered Choir Vestry requires a DDA compliant single door with level threshold. Options to possibly join the doors together and extend their height were considered, but the overall result would be unsatisfactory and hence a new single door is proposed. The existing doors will be offered for sale within the parish.

SOUTH PORCH: The south porch doesn't feature in the listing description but likely dates from the 1863 re-ordering. The internal stone walls feature a mixture of flush and ribbon pointing and there are remnants of an earlier decorative finish. The stone benches to either side are ashlar Ham Hill stone and plain fronted. Five rows of large format Lias slabs form the floor and are most likely original. A 40-50mm shallow step up at the south door has necessitated a temporary timber ramp be installed to help improve access to the church.



South Porch

The proposal would see the removal of all pointing and the walls re-pointed with new flush lime mortar. The walls will then be decorated with limewash to match the interior of the church leaving the ashlar Ham Hill stone unpainted.

It is also proposed to carefully lift the 3 rows of Lias paving nearest to the south door and re-lay these to a constant fall, flush with the door threshold to create a permanent ramp within the porch. This work would retain all historic fabric and have little impact on the significance of the south porch and represent a significant improvement to the current access arrangements.

TOWER: The re-lighting works within the tower is simply the replacement of existing cables and fittings with no impact.