



Christ Church, New Mill (Grade II)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(For the installation of Solar Panels faculty application)

Part I: The church in its urban environment

The church is within the Halifax Archdeaconry of the Diocese of Leeds and situated alongside the road known as Sude Hill, above the village centre of New Mill, near Holmfirth within the Kirklees Metropolitan area. Its four pinnacled tower is a landmark viewed from all the surrounding hills, the church itself being at about 590 feet above ordnance datum.

The church building is listed, grade II and lies near to a conservation area alongside Fulstone Hall Lane to the East and is a typical Commissioners Church. It was built in 1829/30 using funds provided from the 'Million Act', being funds surplus from a war indemnity paid to H.M.G. after the battle of Waterloo.

The building is surrounded by a 'closed cemetery'/churchyard, disused other than for burial of ashes in the Garden of Rest, South of the church. The land, measuring about one acre, was purchased from the Commissioners of the Graveship of Holme for the sum of £100 in 1829.

BUILDING'S LIST DESCRIPTION

The following is an extract from English Heritage's 'Images of England' website, IoE no. 340535. A photo of the South elevation of the church taken in July 2000 can also be viewed thereon.

'SE 10 NE SUDE HILL 5/308 (New Mill) 16.1.67 Christ Church II Gothic revival 'Commissioners' Church. 1830 by Peter Atkinson. Ashlar. Pitched slate roof with parapet with roof top coping. Six bay nave with 2-light slender windows with traceried heads and hood moulds. All but bay to east have stained glass. Square buttresses to nave. Small single bay chancel with 3-light stained glass east window. Three tier west tower with angle buttresses, 2-light louvred bell-chamber, and parapet with 4 tall pinnacles with conical top. Interior: elliptical chancel arch. Gallery to each side on colonnettes, and with oak panelled balustrade. Organ chamber to left. Tall 'wine-glass' pulpit in carved oak on stone base. Carved stone font'.

BUILDING DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION

The following description elaborates the 'Building's List Description' above. The church is of ashlar masonry construction with pitched slate roof with stone parapet and roof top coping. It has a six bay Nave with 2 light slender windows with traceried heads and hood moulds and has square buttresses between each window. All but the East bay have stained glass, including one on the South side dedicated to the Rev. J W Holmes MA and one on the North to Rev. B J Holmes MA (cf below mentioned). There is a small single bay Chancel, elevated by two steps from Nave floor level, with a 3-light stained glass East Window. The Tower is as described above and has a lightning conductor attached.

In the interior there is an elliptical Chancel masonry arch and a gallery to each side of the Nave on colonettes having oak panelled balustrades. There is an organ chamber to the left of the Chancel, above a boiler room basement. On the left side of the East Nave there is a tall 'wine glass' pulpit in carved oak on a stone base. The pulpit is accessed via a stairway, having elaborate brass balusters to the handrail.

The inscription around the base of the pulpit reads, “In Gloriam Dei et Memoriam Patris Carissimi Qui Huic Parochiae Presbyter Praefuit A.D. 1843 – 1878”, which indicates that it is of the Victorian era (1881) and not the original. There is a carved stone font on the North side at the rear of the Nave with a carpeted area adjacent for ease of access around the font. Other features of the interior are mentioned under ‘Building History’ below, as are the location of photographs, which show some of the above features.

BUILDING HISTORY

The church was consecrated on 23rd September 1831, the ceremony being performed by the Archbishop of York, the Hon. and Most Reverend V V Harcourt, D.D. The building was not as seen now, there being no Chancel, stained glass windows, brasses or similar appointments and was described as ‘barn – like’. The church has been in use virtually continually to the present day, including through both World Wars and, from 1838, supported the National School, built opposite, until its closure in 1968, when the new school built at Wooldale replaced it.

Following the New Parishes Act 1856, New Mill’s status became that of a Parish and became progressively go-ahead and public spirited so that funds were raised in mid – 1880 to restore the church in 1881, as described in a local paper, summarised below:

- New Chancel with organ chamber and vestries
- New East Window filled with stained glass
- New sedilia and credence table in stonework with cusped tracery and marble columns in the Chancel
- New oak Chancel stalls with cusped tracery and carvings
- New open stalls in the Nave and Galleries of red deal
- Chancel roof to be circular with ribs and panelled as the Nave
- New encaustic tiles in the Chancel and plain tiles in the Aisles
- New modern oil fired heating apparatus (to replace the old coal/coke burning boiler)
- New organ to replace the old one installed in 1857
- A new stained glass window on the South side in memory of the Rev. J W Holmes, former vicar.

Photographs of some of the above items can be found on the church website, at <http://newmillpc.org.uk/the-building/>.

In 1910 a hydraulic engine was installed for organ blowing, dispensing with the traditional hand blowing, and in 1929 this engine was replaced by electrical blowing apparatus after a drought.

In 1926 electric lighting was installed in the church, arranged by Mr C Hirst in memory of family (cf. Monuments / Plaques below). In 1960, 1962 and 1970 major repairs were carried out to the roof and other areas following the establishment of a Restoration fund and the occurrence of a severe storm in early 1962.

Planning of new gallery rooms for social functions started in 1970 and, following a further appeal for funds, work was completed in 1972, dedicated by the Bishop of Wakefield. It is a simple stud-walled room constructed in 1972 to replace the “church hall” facilities formerly provided by the school building after it closed.

In 1978 the church heating was changed from oil to gas fired and the old oil tank removed from the churchyard. Further repairs to the Tower roof and other areas were carried out in 2001, using a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. In 2008 and 2009, first stage re-ordering of the East and West Nave was completed respectively, funded by a loan from the Kirklees Churches Partnership Trust, now repaid.

In 2012 NET Company installed mobile telephone transmission equipment in the Tower for Vodafone and O2, which was further upgraded in 2015.

In 2019, a project to “future-proof” the church, both for worship and for community use, was started. This involved building an extension to house access toilets and a platform hoist to the ground floor with the first floor gallery room. This extension was built on the NW corner of the church.

In 2021, an internet connection was installed in church, allowing the live-streaming of services and facilitating mission to the local community and beyond.

In 2022, renovation and improvement of the 1972 Gallery Room took place, the final phase of this project, the funds for which were raised by significant grants supplementing local fund-raising and legacies.

In 2022/2023 projects were started to reduce the carbon footprint and improve the main church area. Loft insulation (200mm rockwool), ceiling-mounted destratification fans, and smart heating controls allowing remote switching of the boiler and gallery room heaters were installed. The present application continues the projects aimed at reducing the carbon footprint to zero by 2030.

SIGNIFICANT PERSONALITIES

The establishment of New Mill Church was instigated by the Rev. B Hutchinson, vicar of Kirkburton and Isaac P Newton of Stagwood Hill. The Rev. J W Holmes MA was vicar for 35 years until his death in 1878 aged 63 and was not only responsible for the growth of the church in New Mill but also for the growth and success of the National School opposite the church. He was succeeded by his son, the Rev. Baptist J Holmes MA, who was vicar until his death in 1893. He was married in 1884 to Miss A Trotter, daughter of Dr. Trotter, one of a long line of family doctors in the district (cf ‘Monuments/Plaques’ below).

CHURCHYARD

It is not thought to contain any exceptional monuments other than the memorial to the aforementioned Trotter family located on the East side of the entrance path, which is accessed from Sude Hill through wrought iron gates. The pinnaced stone gateposts are also listed, matching the Tower pinnacles. Ecologically, the churchyard has various trees supporting bird life and grey squirrels.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE – None known.

MONUMENTS/PLAQUES

There are World War memorials to the dead, one being a window on the Nave South side, dedicated in 1920, featuring Sts Oswald and Edwin, both historic Yorkshire heroes and the others being two marble tablets on the walls of the entrance hall. There is a wooden engraved plaque on the South wall dedicated to the aforementioned Trotter family. There is a stone plaque on the rear wall of the Nave to commemorate the installation of electric lighting in memory of the Hirst family. There is a brass plaque on the North wall of the Nave dedicated to Mary Lockwood and some of the other windows are dedicated to other members of the Lockwood family as well the Robertson and Hirst family members.

CHURCH BELLS, CLOCK & TOWER ‘TELECOMS’ INSTALLATION

A ring of six bells was provided in 1864 together with a clock on the West and South faces of the Tower, viewable from Sude Hill. In 1935 the bell fittings were replaced and refurbished. Spare monies from an appeal allowed the clock to be repaired at that time. Responsibility for clock maintenance now lies with the Holme Valley Parish Council. The bells were rehung and rededicated in 1936.

In 2011 mobile phone telecommunications transmission equipment (telecoms) was installed in both the clock room and bell chamber of the tower together with the necessary building works, including new vertical safety access ladders and new matching grp louvres on the W., S., and E. faces to the bell chamber to replace the existing wooden ones. At the same time, as required by the systems, the church’s electricity supply was upgraded to 3-phase and the lightning protection system enhanced.

In 2015 the ‘telecoms’ were upgraded to suit the new transmission requirements.

PROCESSIONAL CROSS

A brass processional cross was dedicated in Easter, 1939, to the memory of Mr. Norman Settle, PCC secretary since its inception in 1920, a Churchwarden and compiler of the church's centenary Souvenir in 1931.

Part II: The significance of the areas affected by the proposals

The roof is pitched slate, currently in a good condition. The proposal is to install solar panels on the south-facing roof, which is not significantly visible from ground level near the church. Its view from across the valley is obscured by buildings and trees. Sude Hill ascends further to the east of the church, and the roof is more visible, but only from a distance at which solar panels will appear largely unobtrusive.

The batteries will be sited inside the church, on the South balcony. During the 2022 renovation of the gallery room, the kitchen was updated and redesigned. Fire regulations in connection with this means that there is now no public access to the south balcony – it is currently used for storage only. Installation of batteries in this area will therefore not impact on the use of the church building, and the batteries will either be contained in an enclosed cupboard area or kept low enough to be invisible from the nave ground floor or chancel.

Cabling between the panels, the batteries, and the electricity mains control area can all be concealed from view by people inside or outside the church. At the time of writing, the exact routing has to be determined, but possible routes include:

- From the panels down through the tower to the mains control area (which is under the stairs in the church porch). There are already concealed conduits that can be followed.
- Cables to the batteries on the balcony can be routed under the balcony floor.
- The loft space is accessible from the tower, or the roof, and cables could be routed through that space, possibly coming down along the kitchen wall where they could easily be concealed.

TO BE ADDED – images: views of the church from ground level, from Spring Lane, from higher Sude Hill.

Bibliography: Listing Description.

Mrs E. Williams, Christ Church, New Mill, 150th Anniversary Souvenir, 1981.

Much of this document is taken from an earlier Statement of Significance compiled by **D. S. Brooke BSc, C. Eng., MICE**

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