

St John the Evangelist Church, Hazelwood, Derbyshire

Statement of Significance

Part 1: The church in its rural environment



The parish of Hazelwood lies three miles to the west of the A6 at Duffield and is a small rural community with a population of around 500. The church stands at the Hazelwood crossroads and serves not only the village of Hazelwood but also smaller clusters of housing at Farnah Green, Blackbrook, Shottle, Shottlegate and Cowers Lane.

The Victorian church (Grade II listed) and school (now closed) were built in 1846, the church being

surrounded by an attractive and lime-tree bounded churchyard. The churchyard is particularly noted for its regular immaculate upkeep by local parishioners and also for its springtime abundance of snowdrops, crocuses and dwarf daffodils.

The architect was H. E. Stevens who designed many churches in the area in the mid 19th Century. The two-level roof was a characteristic of his church design.

The church is small, comprising a single nave (approx. 18.3m x 9.0m) and a chancel (approx. 6.1m x 4.7m). A tiny vestry is located in the chancel area behind the organ. There is a small loft located above the front porch which houses the mechanism for the church clock. Access is via narrow spiral stairs and thus the area is used only as a storage area for small items.

The church is built of Ashlar stone under a slate roof. There are some interesting faces carved in stone along the eaves at the top of the south wall, and at the west end of the roof there is a small belfry housing two bells which are rung before every church service. The clock is in working order and is wound automatically by an electric winding mechanism.

In 1902 there was a disastrous fire which destroyed the roof, stained glass windows, font and nave and left the fabric of the building in a very poor state. However, within a year, the church had been rebuilt, the stained glass windows replaced and a new organ installed, all due to the generosity of local residents and other benefactors. The existing pews were installed at this time. The organ was restored in 1983 and further enhanced during a major refurbishment in 2001. The East window was replaced in 1963 and is a fine example of work by Carl Edwards who also designed windows for the Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool. The bells were re-hung in 1987. In 1998, a toilet was installed at the church for the first time. This necessitated building on at the side of the church porch. Such was the quality of the design and construction, a visitor to the church would never know that this late 20th Century addition was not original.



There is a single altar set behind a wrought iron communion rail. The pulpit on the north side is made from wood set on a stone plinth; there are stone steps with wrought iron handrail. The wooden lectern and adjacent cupboard on the south side provide a secure location for the church Bibles. At the rear of the church there is a stone font on a stone plinth. There are various memorials in the interior of the church including the Hull family memorial on the south wall. The stained glass windows, although relatively modern, are a feature of the church and represent a variety of themes. The attractive hammerbeam roof is of oak timber beams and the pews are solid and in good condition.



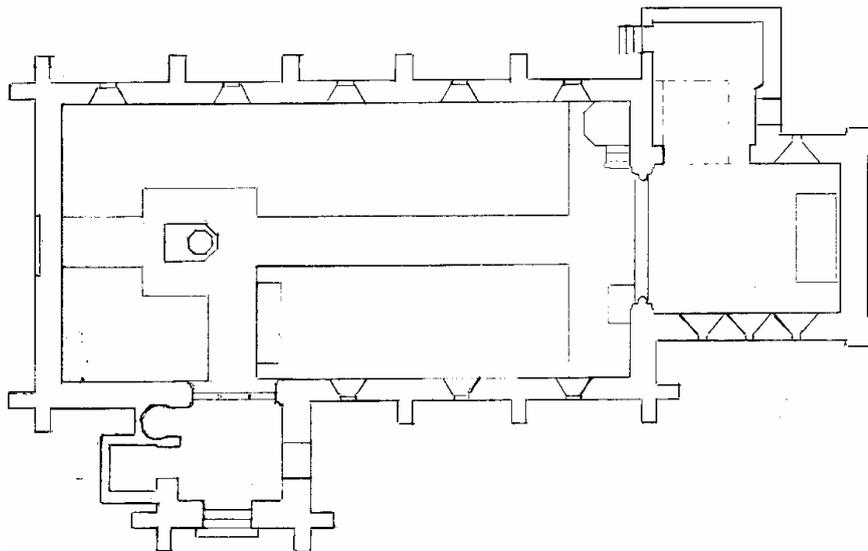
The west door is false and is seen only from the outside; the west wall on the inside incorporates an interesting row of arches. Two bell-ropes, which have been renewed in recent years, hang in front of the west window.

Entry to the church is by the south door at the rear of the church. On entering the church there is a small, and rarely used area of pews to the left, the main body of the church being to the right.

Gas was installed to replace the solid fuel boilers in 1925 and electricity was installed in 1947. More modern additions have included an electric heating system, installed in 1956, audio amplification system, hearing loop system, portable wheel-chair ramp, and night-time floodlighting.

The church has been well-maintained over the years and is in a good state of repair. There is some damp in the walls and some redecoration will be required in due course. The water table in the area has risen in recent years and the old boiler house below the church is now almost permanently full of water. Advice from the Church Architect has been sought and the situation is kept under review by the PCC.

The church is cleaned regularly by a rota of parishioners and minor repairs are always carried out as soon as they are identified.



Part II: The significance of the area affected by the proposal



The church accommodates approximately 220 people and current congregations, apart from special services and other occasions, are rarely more than 50. As a result, the rear of the church is now little used and the PCC are of the opinion that this space could be much better deployed. The proposal is to remove six long and four short pews from the rear of the church to create an open space which can be used for a variety of purposes. It is proposed to install storage units and a sink along the south wall in this area.

The physical removal of pews would not be a problem, but they stand on raised wooden platforms and these would need to be lowered to provide a level floor prior to re-carpeting. The plastering, particularly on the back wall would need to be made good. Two of the short pews on the north side and the pew front (or equivalent) on the left as you enter the church (see photograph) would be retained so that the entry to the church would appear to be in the body of the church, the open space then being to the left. There are no proposals to move the font. Indeed, these proposals would provide much more space around the font for baptisms than at present.

Some high-quality chairs will be purchased for use in this area and, infrequently, when overflow seating for church services and other events is required.

Some attention will have to be given to heating and lighting in this area, but these are not seen as problematic and appropriate professional advice will be sought.

This area of the church is well defined, and opening this space up for more flexible use will not detract from the general appearance of the church and indeed it will provide a more up to date and welcoming aspect.

Statement of Need

The congregation is drawn not only from the village of Hazelwood but also from local clusters of housing and from further afield. While attendance at services remains fairly static, there has been a revival of the Sunday School in recent years and the congregation is keen to see greater integration of the young people and their families into the life and activities of the church. The church has a mission to reach out into this rural community but is always hampered by the current inflexibility of the church premises.

This traditionally designed parish church has space only for seating for church services. There is no other room or suitable area for any other activity and there is no space for people to congregate other than in the aisle. This significantly reduces opportunities for effective informal fellowship. Because the only meeting area is in the aisles, there is always a sense of being “on the move” or people are out of reach and the PCC feel that this is particularly unwelcoming for visitors.

Refreshments are served after two morning services a month, but there are no facilities for this other than a 13 amp socket with kettle and a board precariously balanced across two pew-tops. There is nowhere, other than standing in the aisle, for people to have their coffee. Cups have to be taken off site to be washed up.

There is virtually no space for display of notices, Sunday School work or other material, bookstall, or anything other than can take place in a traditional pew-based environment. There is no space in the church for special exhibitions, display of photographs and other information about the church’s links locally and overseas, and no area for small meetings to take place after church.

While the nearby Memorial Hall (owned by the Parish Council, not the church) provides a large room for events and meetings which will continue to be used for appropriate church events, the need for some open space within the church itself is seen as essential if the church is to fulfil its mission. We are determined that our church should offer better and more welcoming accommodation to meet modern needs in the community and the redesign of this space is seen as essential for that vision.