



**CHRIST CHURCH,
MALVERN ROAD,
CHELTENHAM,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
GL50 2JH**

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE



November 2023

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Holland Heritage
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Authorship and Background

1.1.1 This heritage report is written by Edward Holland, Director of Holland Heritage, for the Christ Church, Cheltenham Parochial Church Council (P.C.C.). It was commissioned on 28th September 2023 by David Arnold of Arnold Bartosch Ltd on behalf of the P.C.C. to advise on the heritage significance of Christ Church in order to inform potential future change.

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1.2 Location

Christ Church is situated at National Grid Reference SO 93982 22277, at the junction of Christ Church Road and Malvern Road and with a side elevation to Overton Road.



Figure 1 Aerial view © www.gridreferencefinder.com

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The purpose of this Statement of Significance is to fully understand the historic asset and its context and to inform the potential for future change.

1.3.2 The assessment carried out here follows guidance published by Historic England. In particular ‘*Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance*’ (2008 - as updated by the revised consultation draft issued in November 2017) and ‘*The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3*’ (2017). These documents contain the general principles to consider when planning changes to historic assets. The assessment carried out follows the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (revised in July 2021).

1.3.3 This report is based upon a site survey on 11th October 2023 together with desk-based research.

1.4 Relevant Heritage Designations

1.4.1 Christ Church together with the adjacent Church Hall is listed Grade II* (Historic England reference 1103838), designated on 12th March 1955.

1.4.2 The following map identifies neighbouring listed buildings.

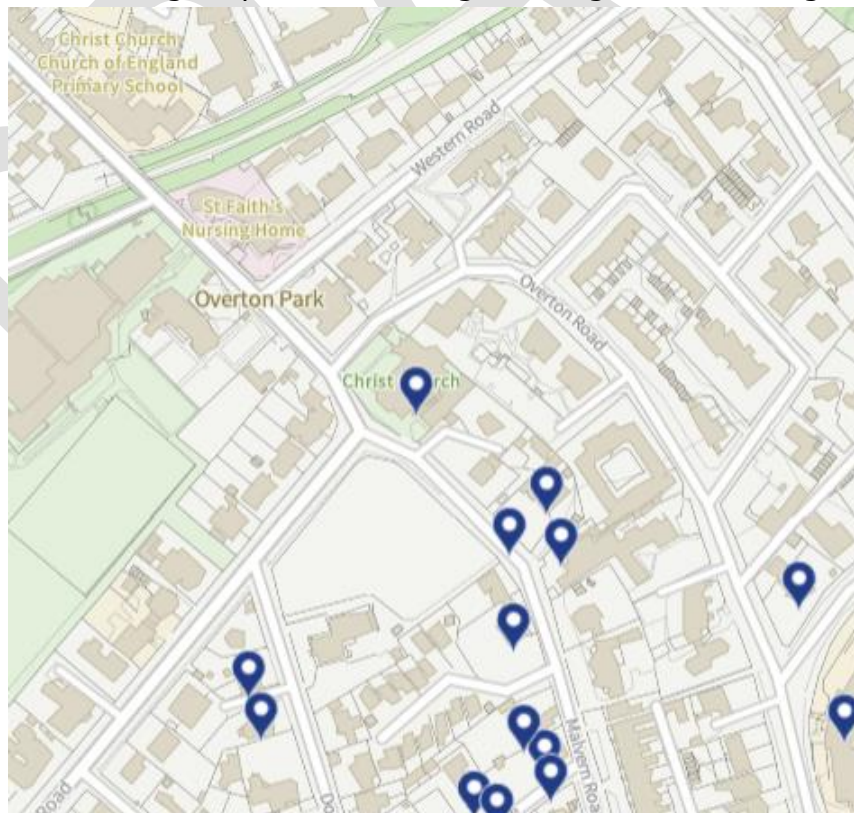


Figure 2 Map showing designated heritage assets near Christ Church © Historic England

1.4.3 Of the above the following are within approximately 100m of Christ Church:

Listed Building Name	Grade	Historic England Ref:
The Grange and Grange Wing and attached Balustrade to Rear	II	1245173
Gate Pier and Wall to south-west of The Grange (Numbers 1 and 2) and Grange Wing	II	1245176
Gate Pier Railings and Wall to south of The Grange (Numbers 1 and 2)	II	1245178

1.4.4 Christ Church is within the Cheltenham Central Area Conservation Area, close to its western boundary and in the Lansdown character area. The area was designated in May 1973 and enlarged in August 1987.

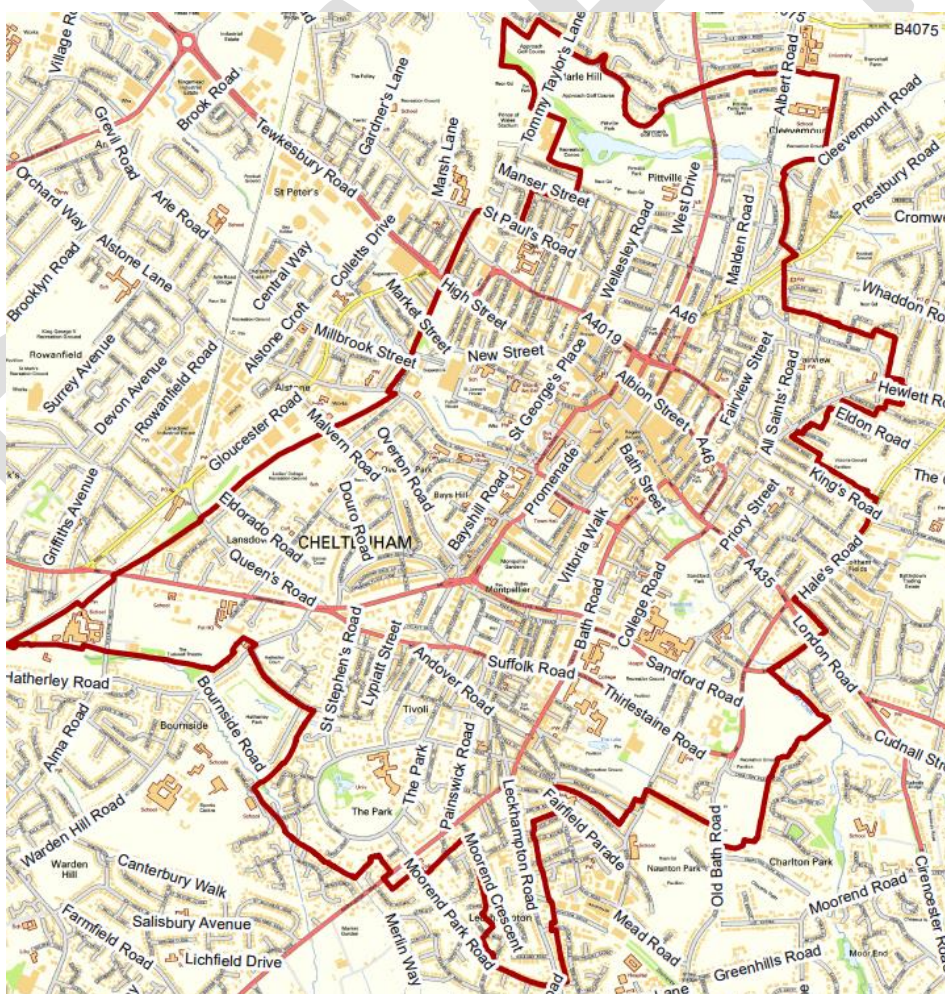


Figure 3 Boundary of Cheltenham Central Conservation Area © Cheltenham Borough Council

2.0 History of Christ Church

2.1 Christ Church was built 1837-40 to the designs of the local architects Robert Willam Jearrad (1783-1861) and his brother Charles. The builder was Thomas Newton and the foundation stone was laid on 10th October 1837.¹ The church was intended to be a focal point in the planned Lansdown development and the extract from the map dated 1855 shows how the church had been positioned to dominate the junction between Malvern Road and Christ Church Road. Indeed, it is aligned specifically to face down the slope of Christ Church Road rather than being on a true East/West alignment as was more typical for churches. The land was given by the lawyer Pearson Thompson (1794-1872) who was responsible for much of the layout of Cheltenham from 1820 onwards. The land was then bought by Jearrad who completed the Lansdown development to his own designs as well as making a major contribution to the Regency architecture of Cheltenham with their Montpelier Arcade and Queens Hotel. Jearrad is also known for inventing a washing machine specifically for sterilisation in hospitals.



Figure 4 1855 Map of Cheltenham © Know Your Place www.maps.bristol.gov.uk – showing Christ Church but without the surrounding development

¹ J K Cavell, *The Story of Christ Church, Cheltenham*, 1962.

2.2 Christ Church was the last of five churches to be built in the period 1822 to 1837 to serve the rapidly growing town which had started the 19th century with a population of 3000 but had risen to 36,000 by 1840. Christ Church was consecrated on 22nd January 1840 and provided seats for 2075, 485 of which were free. It had cost the vast sum of £18,111.²



Figure 5 1879-1888 Town Plan showing some residential development having taken place
© Know Your Place www.maps.bristol.gov.uk



Figure 6 Ordnance Survey map Gloucestershire Sheet XXV1.7 published in 1903
(reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)

² S Blake, *Cheltenham Churches and Chapels, A.D. 773 -1883* (Cheltenham, July 1979)



2.3 In 1870s the Rev Dr Venn Childe initiated the remodelling of the church to suit the needs of the worship of the day. The architect John Middleton was commissioned and he suggested the interior should be remodelled in the form of a basilica with apparent disregard for the Gothic style of the original church. It is said that his design can be seen hanging in the Top Vestry though this was not fully accessible at the time of survey.

2.4 In 1875 the organ was moved from the west end to the north transept. Between 1888 and 1893 the church was enlarged by the addition of the apse together with the remodelling of the interior, to the designs of H A Prothero based upon the inspiration of Middleton's earlier design.

2.5 The apse roof was painted by Sir William Richmond (1842-1921) who made his name as a portrait painter and went on to succeed Ruskin as Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford. He was assisted in his work at Christ Church by the Scottish artist and Christian Socialist, James Eadie-Reid (1868-1928) who painted the wall panels, perhaps because at this time Richmond was engaged on a major scheme at St. Paul's Cathedral. Eadie-Reid also painted the reredos and was Visiting Art Master at the Cheltenham Colleges.

2.6 The church was restored in 1956 by Robert Peterson, the then Diocesan Architect and this included the creation of the chapel in the north transept though it is not seen in the 1956 photograph. At the same time the organ was rebuilt and the existing organ case was probably designed at that time. Concurrent with this work the Baptistery was reordered and the tower was repaired.

2.7 In 1967 a single-storey flat-roofed block was built along the south side of the nave to provide a Parish Office and Choir Vestry.

2.8 In 1978 the front rows of pews to the centre of the nave were removed to enable the semi-circular platform to be installed in memory of Doris Pike. Around the same time Bryant Fedden's cross was hung. Other relatively recent works included the creation of a wider doorway to the south side of the Baptistery.

2.9 A multi-purpose church hall known as the Harwood Hall was built in 2000 and won a Civic Trust Award in 2002. Other formerly detached church rooms to the south were joined to the church in 2006 by the creation of a covered area between the two.

3.0 Description of the Exterior of Christ Church

3.1 The church is immediately distinctive for its lofty west tower and its strong Early English Gothic style. Although the footprint of the church is not especially large the scale of the architectural detailing is cathedral-like. It is constructed of fine Dodwell Hill, Whittington, limestone facing with a Forest of Dean plinth and a Welsh slate roof.



Figure 7 Christ Church west end

3.2 Tower

The tall, narrow, Perpendicular west tower has echoes in its panelled tracery and openwork parapet, of the style of the central towers at Gloucester Cathedral and Great Malvern Priory, to name two major churches in this region. The two-light openings to each face of the belfry have ogee heads with crocketed hoods and acutely pointed arches. The projecting polygonal corner turrets are emphasised by tall crocketed finials and the top of the tower has an openwork parapet.

3.3 West front

There is no west door in the conventional sense but instead doors to either side that gave access to vast vestibules with stairs up the gallery and doors into the aisles or into the Baptistry. The central, gabled, part of the west elevation is characterised by a tall, stepped, 3-light Early English window with the nook shafts to the lancets having stiff-leaf foliage capitals. There is further crocketed detail to the gable within which is set a round clock face. The gable is framed by large, stepped and gabled, buttresses that are themselves gabled, to the top and also below impost level. They are also surmounted by pinnacles further accentuating the verticality of the elevation. There is a high moulded plinth across the west elevation. The north and south doors are monumentally tall Early English entrances under steep crocketed gables with blind, pointed-arched, niches. The arches themselves are of three orders and have stiff leaf foliage and a quatrefoil over paired cusped headed paired doorways.

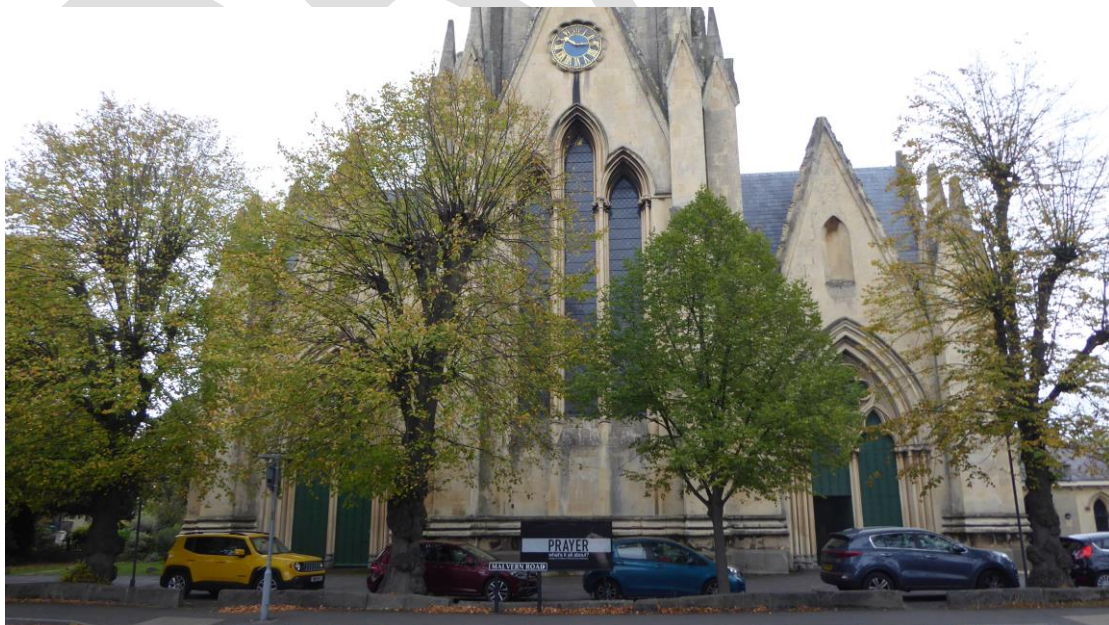


Figure 8 Christ Church west front showing entrances

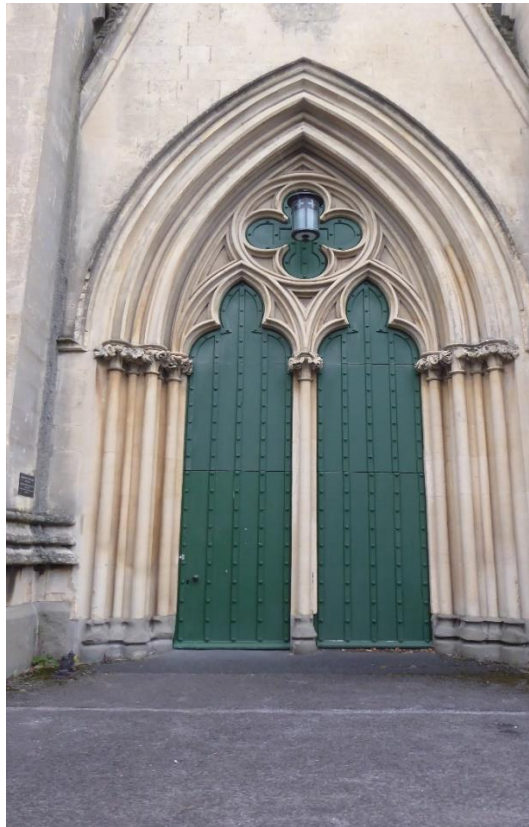


Figure 9 Christ Church north door

3.4 North and South sides



Figure 10 Christ Church south side

The 4-bay nave has tall pointed arched Y-tracery windows to both north and south sides, set between the projecting vestibules and the projecting transepts with their stepped three-light windows. The elevations are

punctuated by stepped buttresses. The transepts have stepped three-light windows and an asymmetrical appearance on account of the polygonal stair turret to the western corners. On the north side the crocketed finial to the eastern corner remains but the corresponding one to the south side is broken. The original more completed crocketed appearance is seen in an illustration dated 1840 (figure 14). The stair turrets have lancet windows and there is a cinquefoil ventilator to the transept gables.



Figure 11 South vestibule gable end



Figure 12 North side



Figure 13 Illustration dated 1840 of Christ Church south side

3.5 East end

The polygonal apse is added to the formerly square east end which is shown in old photographs to have had a stepped 3-light lancet window similar to that at the west end. There is a quatrefoil to the east gable. The apse itself has narrow round-headed windows and to the base is now some unsympathetic ducting. There is a projecting vestry to the south with hipped roof and shouldered windows.



Figure 14 Christ Church East end

3.6 Church Hall

This single-storey, former school, building was added in 1847 and is now attached to the south side by a modern glass-roofed linking corridor that provide covered access to all the church community's facilities, including office, toilets and Harwood hall. It is built in matching stone and is shown on the early map to indicate that it was part of the original scheme and has similar Early English detailing. The modern link dates from the early 21st century.



Figure 15 Christ Church Hall to south side

4.0 Description of the Interior of Christ Church

NB the following description uses the liturgical east and west in favour of the precise directions as the church is not aligned strictly east/west.

4.1 Overview

Christ Church is distinctive as a large preaching box church typical of the period when the Church of England needed to provide accommodation for large numbers within the new communities of growing towns and cities. Stylistically, Christ Church's Byzantine east end contrasts markedly with the Gothic of the exterior. The main body of the church has raked galleries to the west, north and south and once had seating for over 2000 people. There are central and side aisles flanked by panelled pews, there is a raised choir and then steps up to the apse that, through its remarkable decoration, is the focal point of the church interior. The original east end was square with three blind lancets containing painted texts and the rest of the church had high box pews. A wooden-framed ceiling spans the enormous, approximately 18m, width of the church. The walls of the nave and Baptistry have been dry-lined up to at least 60cm above the former dado.

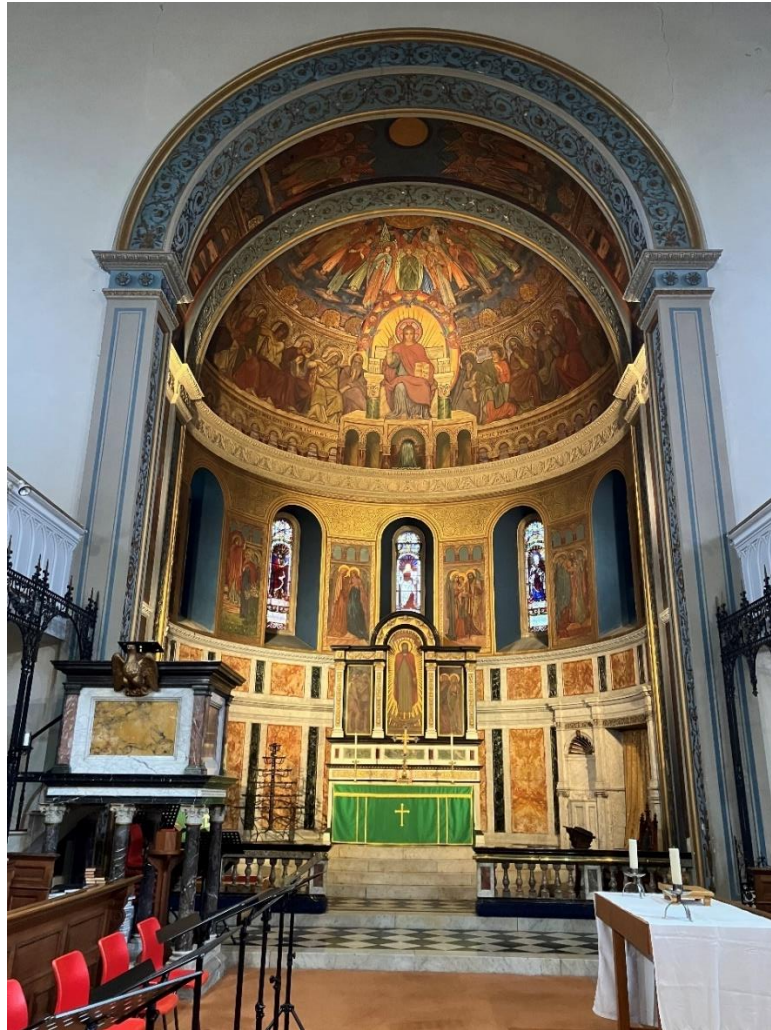


Figure 16 View towards sanctuary



Figure 17 View east from south-west corner of Christ Church East end



Figure 18 View west from the pulpit

4.2 Gallery

4.2.1 The galleries are carried on cast-iron columns that, in the late-19th century remodelling, were encased in more neo-classical implied marble with high bases, leaving two of the columns at the west end unaltered. No foundry plates could be seen. The front of the gallery has continuous Gothic arcading. The easternmost columns have octagonal bases.

4.2.2 The western gallery was originally the organ loft and is exceptionally steeply raked. To the top are later, plain, pitch-pine pews and pine boarded floors probably installed after the organ was moved from here to the north transept in 1875. The soffit and extreme west wall are curiously horizontally boarded rather than plastered. The pointed western arch into the former organ loft is closed by a simple Gothic screen, panelled to base and open above. A wooden panel to the centre dated July 1847 records that it is to the memory of Frederick Robertson, who was Curate of Christ Church in the 1840s and evidently a prolific writer.



Figure 19 View west from the south gallery

4.2.3 The raked galleries retain the original c.1840 whitewashed box pews and they are substantially intact. The north transept gallery was partly removed when the organ was moved here in 1875 and the south transept stores some later 19th century pews removed from the body of the nave.



Figure 20 Font at west end

4.3 **Baptistry**

This area of the church has been reordered perhaps in two phases and there may have been a screen dividing this area from the nave. The floor has

been replaced with concrete and the font has been moved back against the west wall. The south door has been widened to double, half-glazed, doors. The ceiling is corbelled perhaps as it formerly bore the weight of the organ. The Gothic font made in 1865 has deeply carved figurative panels and foliage carving to the base on a polished granite pedestal.

4.4 Porches

These are full-height concrete floored spaces at the south-west and north-west corners of the church. To the south is the main entrance into the church providing access directly up to the gallery, or north into the Baptistry or east into the corridor leading to the modern additions and converted former school. That to the north is known as the Alstone Porch and is no longer used as an entrance to the church. Both have distinctive cantilevered stone staircases (figure 21) with a scrolled curtail and ornate iron balustrade with alternating plain and foliage enriched uprights. They also have rounded projections to the inner corners containing winding timber stairs up to the high western gallery and the belfry. The ceiling to the north porch has been replaced but that to the south appears unaltered and may reflect the original appearance of the main nave ceiling.

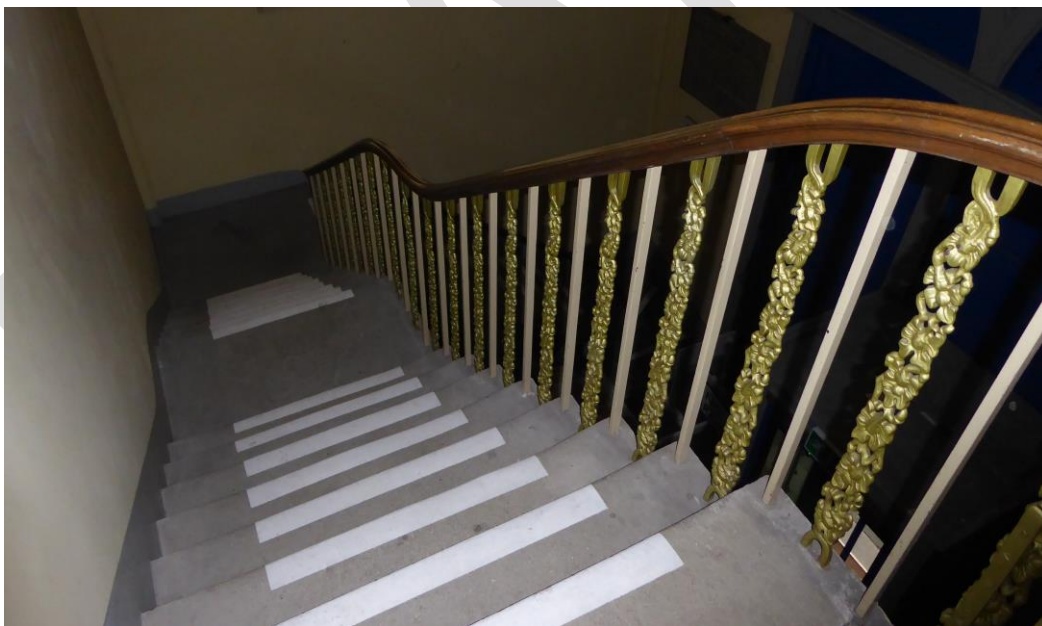


Figure 21 Staircase to gallery from south porch

4.5 Choir

At the east end of the nave are modern semicircular steps up to the choir. Originally there was a single step aligned with the low marble screen enclosing a kind of 'Chorus Cantorum'. The base of this is now partly obscured by the modern steps but the use of marble remains dominant. The Italianate Classical frame is of black Levanto marble with Siena marble panels to the end and central pilasters flanking, more unusual, pinky grey

marble panels. The southern side carries a brass lectern. An inscription evidences that the alteration to this area to create a “nave sanctuary” was carried out c.1974 in memory of Doris Pike (1913-1974). One desk of carved and panelled oak choir stalls and music stand remain while the others have been relocated to the south transept. The stall to the north side includes a Vicar’s chair. Enclosing the choir to north and south are 10-bay wrought-iron screens with highly ornate frieze, characteristic of Prothero’s work. These include a twin-arched gated opening to the south into the transept.



Figure 22 Choir screen



Figure 23 Choir stalls



Figure 24 Metalwork screen added to separate choir from transepts



Figure 25 Pulpit

4.6 Pulpit

This tall rectangular marble pulpit was erected in 1888 in memory of Rev J F Fenn who was vicar of this church for 24 years. It has a similar mixture of exotic marbles as the choir screen and is open-sided to the base. The

corner piers are of the same Levanto marble with Breccia marble composite capitals and frames to the side panels with inset Siena and other marbles as well as red marble pilasters to the corners. The black Levanto marble cornice is damaged to the eastern side. The pulpit itself is reached by a dog-legged marble stairs added on the north side c.1898³, the balustrade of which has a mixture of red and black marbles under a broad handrail and a newel panelled with Siena marble.



Figure 26 Pulpit stairs

4.7 South and North Transepts

The South Transept retains a complete raked gallery (figure 27) accessed by winding stairs (figure 30), the doors at the top of which once had baize facing but now largely decayed. Baize was traditionally used to deaden noise and even control odours, and so would have been used here to avoid sounds from the staircase intruding on worship by those already seated in the gallery. Part of the comparable space to the North Transept was removed in 1875 when the organ was moved to the current position (figure 28). On the west side of the organ an area has been screened off as the Flower Vestry. At the lower level the Transepts retain a large collection of wall monuments, discussed in more detail below but those to the North Transept are partially obscured by the insertion of the organ and Lady Chapel. The pews have also been removed from the North Transept but are partially retained in the South Transept, which also now houses relocated choir stalls and their music stands. Architecturally the transepts retain slightly incongruous Gothic clustered corbel shafts placed either side of the openings into the transepts (figure 29).

³ D Verrey and A Brooks, *Gloucestershire 2: The Vale and The Forest of Dean*, (Buildings of England series) Penguin 2002, p.233



Figure 27 South Transept at gallery level



Figure 28 North Transept at gallery level



Figure 29 View across transepts showing clustered shafts with Gothic style foliage carving



Figure 30 South Transept gallery stairs



Figure 31 South Transept

4.8 Sanctuary

4.8.1 There is a full-height semicircular arched opening into the sanctuary which is consciously designed in a Byzantine Revival manner and lavishly painted. The inspiration would have been the churches of Venice and Rome and whereas the decorative quality of the exterior is derived from the architecture, here in the Sanctuary the decorative quality is primarily derived from the painted decoration on to an otherwise simple apse. The pilasters to the arch are fictive panels and Italianate foliage trails around the arch and its soffit. The sanctuary is formed of an outer bay up one step and then the communion rails and the apse itself up a further step. The pavement throughout is of black and white marble laid in a chequerboard pattern. The balustraded communion rails are also marble with panelled piers.



Figure 32 View into Sanctuary and apse

4.8.2 The composition of the sanctuary is well-proportioned leading the eye towards the high altar, raised up four steps and retaining coloured marble communion rails in keeping with the style of the c.1890 furnishings (figure 33). At the mid-point, aligned with the reredos, there is a band of Siena marble framed by black Levanto marble pilasters. This rich decorative scheme is continued below a moulded cornice and incorporates a fine Italian Renaissance style sedilia and piscina to the south side (figure 34). The two are framed by the one cornice and by fluted pilasters and with a shell hood to the piscina with panelled sides to the basin. The reredos itself (figure 35) is in the form of a triptych painted by J Eadie-Reid, with Christ to the centre flanked by two pairs of saints. The condition of the paintwork has suffered making it hard to identify the iconography. To the upper level are six round-arched stained-glass windows with the surrounding walls and

apsidal semi-dome enriched by Pre-Raphaelite style fresco painting. Flanking the windows are panels of scenes from the life of Christ.

4.8.3 Above the windows is a frieze and cornice and then pre-Raphaelite imagery behind a fictive balustrade at the base of the apsidal semi-dome. The texts of Revelation chapter 21 verses 6 and 7 are painted, one in a band at the top of the balustrade and the other at the higher level. Christ in Majesty is depicted to the centre flanked by the twelve disciples and angels circle above at the crown of the apse (figure 36). It is all depicted with a high level of artistic quality.



Figure 33 Communion Rails



Figure 34 Sedilia and Piscina

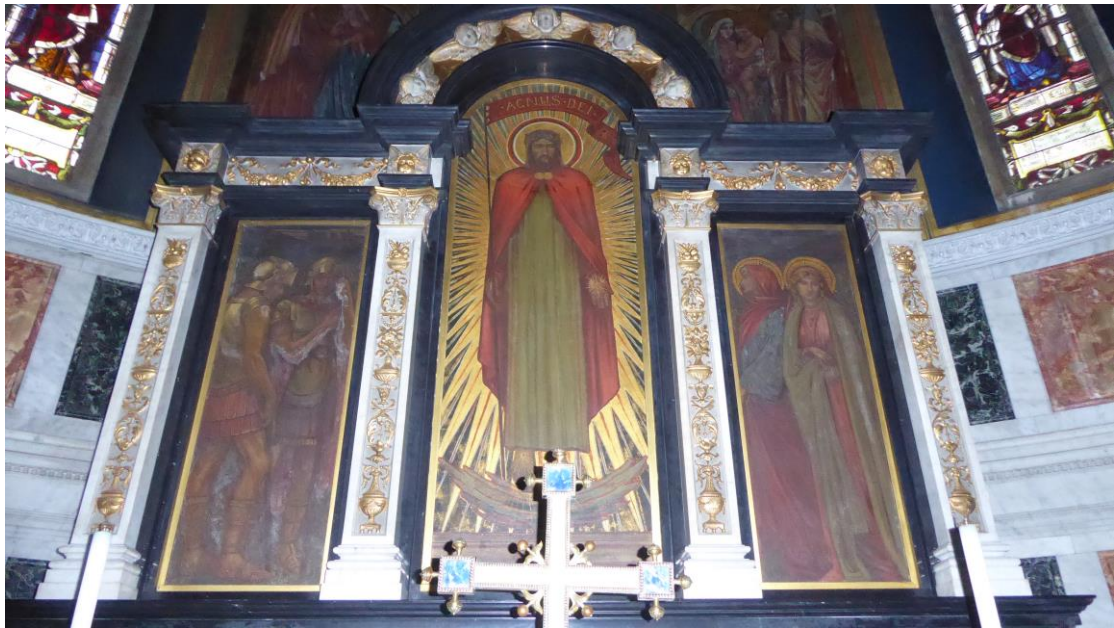


Figure 35 Reredos

4.8.4 Low round arched doorways lead off to north and south of the sanctuary, that to the south into the vestry and that to the north to a small war memorial.



Figure 36 Apse ceiling

4.9 Lady Chapel

This occupies the eastern end of the nave north aisle and is separated from the remainder of the north transept by an oak screen, beyond which are

store areas. The chapel altar is set under an unsatisfactorily deep oak canopy with panelled soffit and a marquetry panelled reredos. The chapel contains a 2nd World War memorial panel. The Gothic organ case may be of the same period as the chapel, notwithstanding the fact that the organ was moved here a long time before that.



Figure 37 Lady Chapel

4.10 Pews

The original boxed pews remain to the raked gallery and are painted white matching the gallery frontal. The pews to the steeply raked west gallery are more simple without backs or panelling. To the main body of the nave these were later replaced with the existing, more spacious, pitch pine pews, probably as part of the c.1890 remodelling. They have panelled backs and bench ends.



Figure 38 Gallery Pews



Figure 39 Nave Pews



Figure 40 South Transept pews

4.11 Stained Glass

The church retains a good collection of stained-glass windows. Those to the apse windows are by Burlison and Grylls of London and inserted during the remodelling of 1888-93. The windows in the aisles are mostly by Heaton Butler and Bayne of London and inserted in 1901-2. Others in the nave aisles were donated by the Freemasons in 1906-7 and are by Lavers and Westlake of London.⁴ All these stained-glass makers worked with the pre-eminent architects of the period.

⁴ Verey and Brooks, pg. 233

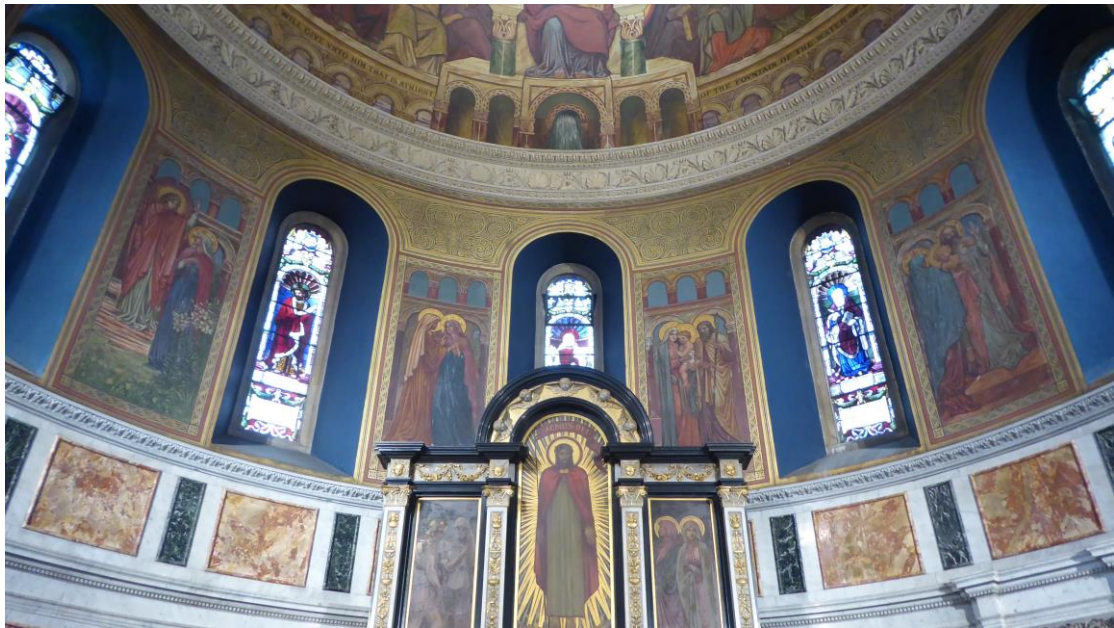


Figure 41 Apse windows by Burlison and Grylls



Figure 42 Example of nave windows by Heaton Butler and Bayne (south aisle)

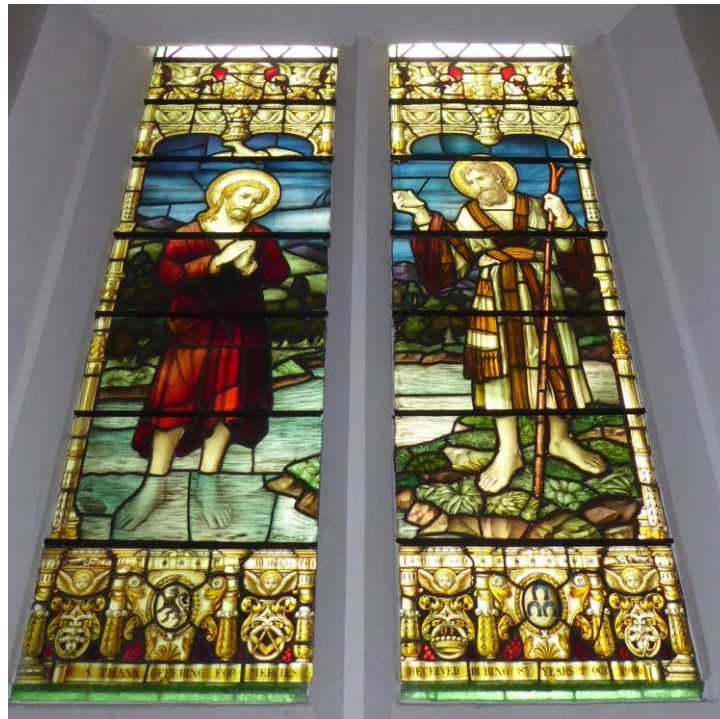


Figure 43 Example of nave aisle windows by Lavers and Westlake (north aisle)

4.12 Monuments

4.12.1 The church retains a large collection of 19th and early 20th century monuments that are mostly neo-classical in style. The Baptistry retains a group of Gaitskell monuments to its north wall commemorating family members who died between 1883 and 1938. On the west wall is also a monument to Thomas Newton, builder of this church, who later died on a voyage to South Africa. It is of a curious Gothic design with deep cusped hood. The north wall has some brass plaques by Marshall of Cheltenham and Hart of London.



Figure 44 Group of Gaitskell family monuments to Baptistry south wall



Figure 45 Monument to Thomas Newton on west wall

4.12.2 Elsewhere in the church many of the monuments are by George Lewis, sculptor of 14 Clarence Street, Cheltenham. In the north aisle these include the monument to Susan Elizabeth Lingwood, died 1862, Barbara Robinson, died 1863 and William Barnett, died 1867 (figure 46). In the south aisle monuments by Lewis include Lieut. General Fiddes, died in 1863 (figure 47) and Richard Tickell, died 1855, Robert Hay, died 1849 and Christopher Codrington who died in 1841. The signature on the monument to William Hay, died 1851, is partially obscured following the dry-lining of the wall, but the LE seen is assumed to be Lewis.



Figure 46 Example of north aisle monument by Lewis of Cheltenham

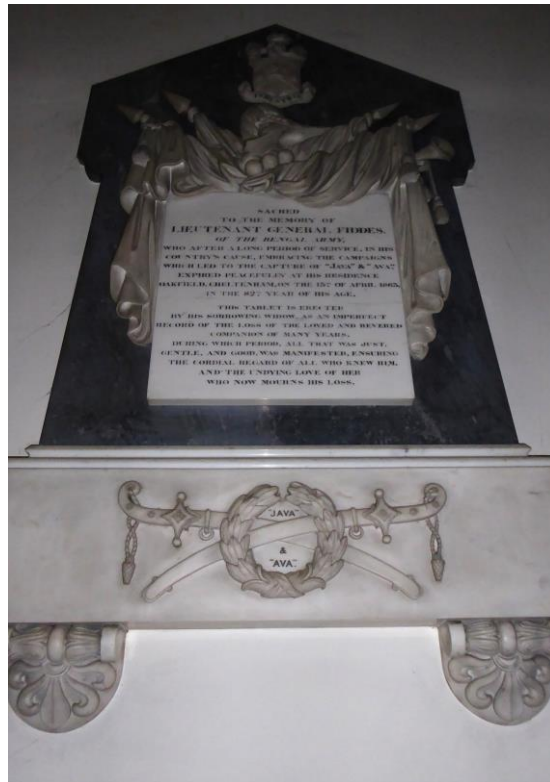


Figure 47 Example of south aisle monument by Lewis of Cheltenham



Figure 48 Example of where later dry-lining of aisle wall has partially obscured the signature on the monument

4.12.3 Verey and Brooks⁵ cite the monument to William Dalzell on the east wall of the south transept as the best example here of Lewis's work (figure 49). His south transept monument to Sir Henry Sheehy Keating, died 1847 is also notable. Other fine monuments include that to Capt. John McNeill Boyd, died 1861, by Bedford of London. The monuments in the North Transept are mostly obscured.

⁵ Verey and Brooks, p.233



Figure 49 Monument to William Dalzell on South Transept east wall

4.12.4 Distinctive, neo-classical, monuments to the North Transept east wall have been insensitively obscured by the creation of the Lady Chapel altar and can no longer be read. Some monuments to the South Transept are also obscured by chairs stacked against them.



Figure 50 Monuments obscured by the Lady Chapel altar that butts up against them

4.13 Floors

The floors of the main body of the church are mostly parquet and in good condition. They probably relate to the c.1890 remodelling when the existing pews were installed. Analysis of the floor shows marks where pews formerly existed but have been removed in subsequent re-orderings. The main aisle is carpeted and with iron heating grilles to either side and there is a similar carpet to the concrete Baptistry floor.



Figure 51 Parquet floors characteristic of much of the interior – here also showing evidence of the position of former pews that have been removed

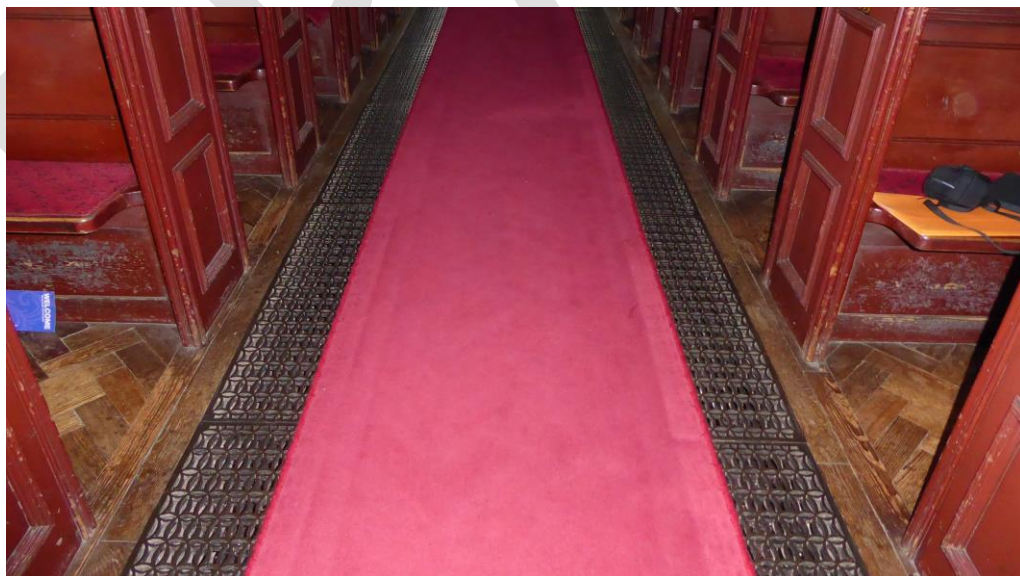


Figure 52 Central nave aisle with c.1890 pews and parquet floors to either side

4.14 Other furnishings and fittings

Over the choir is a glass hanging cross by Bryant Fedden (1930-2004) that was installed in 1979. He is a renowned glass engraver, sculptor and letter-cutter who was based in Gloucestershire.



Figure 53 Glass cross above choir

4.15 Regimental Colours (Textiles)

4.15.1 Hanging high up at the west end are four textile colours, three of which hang in conservation covers. Two commemorate the Old Contemptibles the name given to the veterans of the British Expeditionary Force which served in Flanders in 1914 and distinguished themselves at the first battle of Ypres. The colour to the south is the Cheltenham Branch Standard and one to the north is the Queen's Colour. Between those hangs a frayed colour of the Gloucestershire Regiment. To the far north end is an uncovered colour of the Dunkirk Veterans Association.

4.15.2 The condition of these could not be closely inspected at the time of survey but it is recommended that they are periodically inspected by a specialist conservator. The coverings will protect the textiles from dust but long-term they may create high levels of humidity that could be damaging.



Figures 54 and 55 Regimental colours hanging at west end of church



4.16 Miscellaneous

4.16.1 The belfry retains a single bell.

4.16.2 To the foot of the south porch gallery stairs is an undated mid-19th century wooden panel fixed to the wall with painted instructions about how and when worshippers should pay for their seats to attend church. It is of

interest for its illustration of the former practice of pew renting which some churches used as a way of paying off construction costs or meeting expenses including the incumbent's stipend. Here at Christ Church only a quarter of the pews were free.

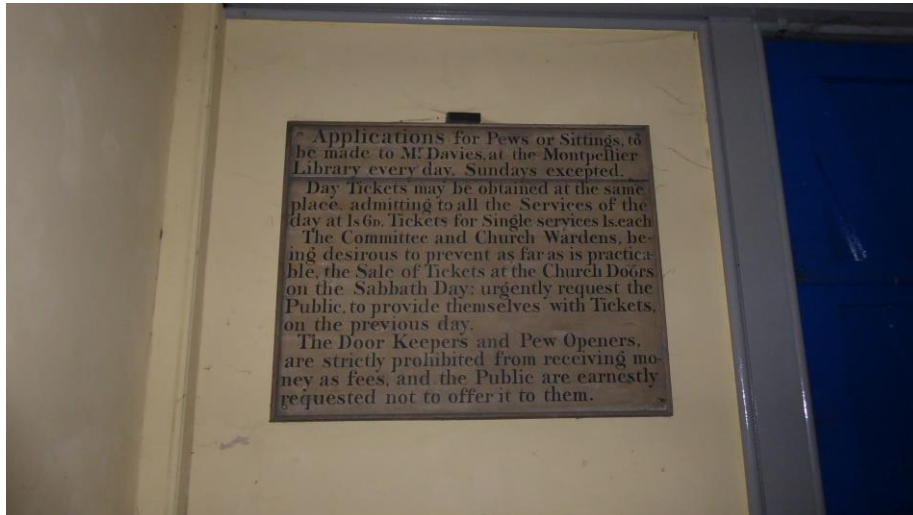


Figure 56 Notice to west wall of south porch, at the foot of the gallery stairs

4.18 Church Facilities to the south side

The following plan hanging in the Baptistry illustrates the additional space created on the south side of the church where the former school has been converted and linked to the main building in an imaginative scheme of c.2000 and 2006. Against the south wall of the church is a meeting room, church office and toilets. Between this and the former school is a corridor under a glazed roof and to the south is the Music Room at the west end in the former school. To the east of that are further meeting rooms and then the large open roofed Harwood Hall at the far east end.

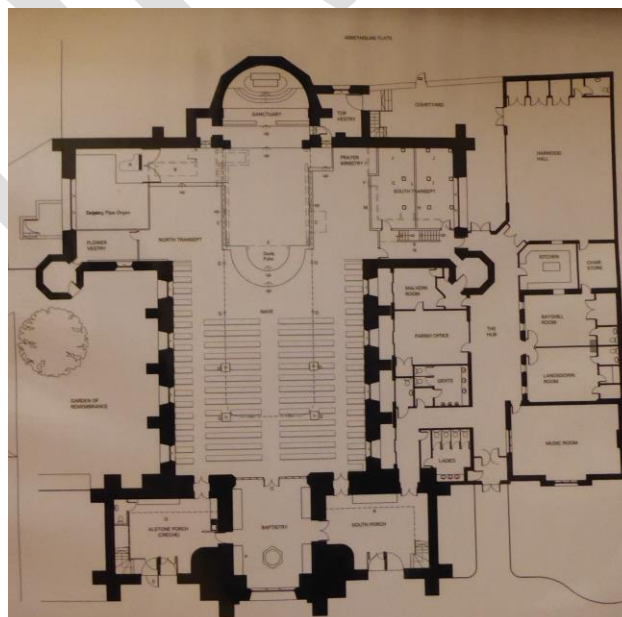


Figure 57 Plan of church as existing



Figure 58 View east through the covered space created between church and former school



Figure 59 Window to former church school, now Music Room and internal

5.0 Description of the Churchyard

The church is set in a small churchyard on this corner plot. There is a Garden of Remembrance to the north-west but the land to the east is largely now occupied by modern housing. There are no significant monuments. The church is set back from the road behind a low stone plinth that probably once supported railings and there are now mature trees. To the north side along Overton Road there is a low stone boundary wall and to the east the apse overlooks the gardens of neighbouring flats.

6.0 Christ Church and the Lansdown Conservation Area

6.1 Christ Church is a focal building within the conservation area having been consciously designed to dominate the junction between Malvern Road and Christ Church Road from the vantage point of higher ground. The usual strict east west orientation was relaxed to achieve the liturgical west elevation facing down a route that was to be lined by houses as part of the Lansdown estate development planned by Jeerrad.

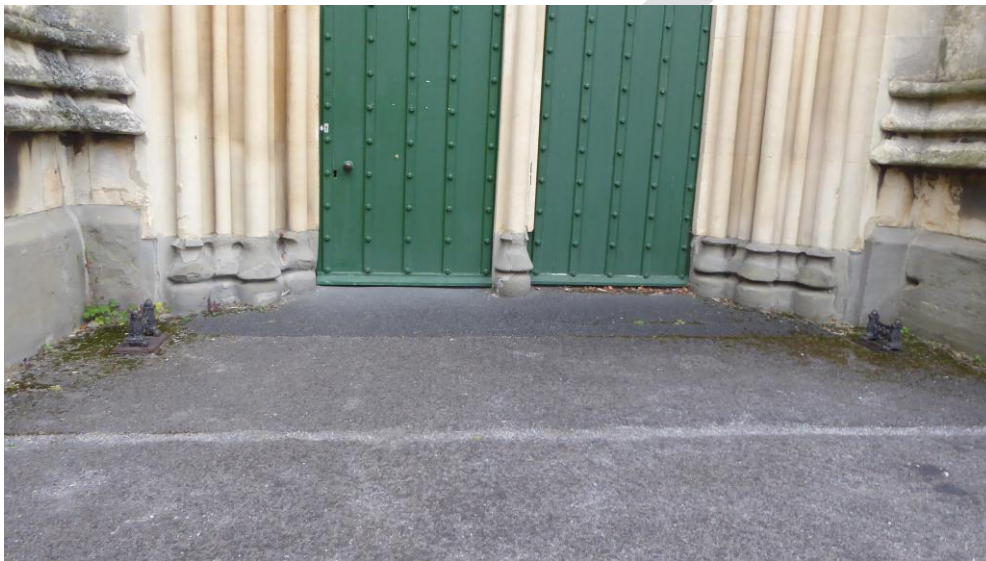


Figure 60 View north-east along Christ Church Road towards the church

6.2 The Lansdown Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan published by Cheltenham Borough Council in 2008 emphasised the importance of the long views towards Christ Church including from the playing fields of Cheltenham Ladies' College. Overall, Christ Church has a strong sense of place and is integral to the built environment around it.

7.0 Condition of the Heritage Asset

7.1 The latest Quinquennial report⁶ refers to the fact that the soft local stone has suffered erosion, although the church appears in generally good condition. In terms of stonework conservation issues, it is understood that pinnacles have in the past fallen and the weathering of those that remain is clear, especially with regard to the crocketed detail. The loss of original detail on these has resulted in some diminution of the heritage significance of the building. The plinth and bases of the clustered shafts to the jambs of the main entrances also evidence stone decay.



Figures 61 and 62 Evidence of stonework erosion



⁶ Sutton Cox Architects, *Report on the Quinquennial Inspection carried out during September 2021*

7.2 Internally there are areas of flaking plaster, potentially as a result of the application of non-breathable paint. This may be a long-standing problem and the reason for the dry-lining of the lower part of the nave walls. More seriously the surface of the plaster in the apse is crumbling probably due to moisture penetration or condensation and in the process this is losing some of the important fresco painting. The intensity of the original colour has been lost due to an accumulation of dirt and candle grease and this has especially affected the reredos. Cleaning by a specialist paint conservator is needed to restore the quality of this interior decoration. Conservation is also needed of the pulpit where cracking of the marble cornice has led to a large piece breaking off.



Figure 63 Evidence of moisture ingress damaging the painted plaster



Figure 64 Damage to the marble on the pulpit

8.0 Assessment of Heritage Values

8.1 The assessment of significance has used the four heritage values set out in Historic England's published guidance (*Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance 2008* including the revised edition that was issued for consultation in November 2017 but has not yet been formally published).

It sets out criteria for how significance can be evaluated, considering Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal values and says that:

"The significance of an historic asset embraces all of the cultural heritage values that people associate with it".

8.2 Evidential Value

8.2.1 This derives from those elements of a heritage asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, including its physical remains or historic fabric. These remains provide the primary evidence for when and how a heritage asset was made or built, what it was used for, and how it has changed over time.

8.2.2 Christ Church has high evidential value as a place of worship continuing its original function dating back to the second quarter of the 19th century. It also today demonstrates evidence of being a diverse church community with a range of ancillary spaces to hold secular and religious functions. The position of the church also evidences that it was built as part of an important early Victorian expansion of Cheltenham at the time of the town's rapid growth and when additional places of worship were needed.

8.2.3 The Gothic design of the church is evidence of the interest in the Gothic Revival in the early to mid-19th century made more fashionable by the popularity of this style with the so-named Commissioners Churches of the early decades of the century. Here the local architect Jeerrad made their own interpretation of Early English whereas Ruskin and his followers favoured a faithful, almost archaeological, approach to copying 13th century Gothic. Christ Church therefore evidences an exuberant variation on Early English with dramatic gables, pinnacles and decorative detail.

8.2.4 Internally Christ Church evidences that it was initially designed to provide space for worship by a large number of people. The deep raked gallery on three sides combined with the pews in the nave and transepts to seat around 2000 people in a format known as a preaching box.

8.2.5 The remodelling of the church c.1890 and the creation of the apse is evidence of the interest at that time in Byzantine architecture and in the use of colourful marbles, mosaics and painted decoration. Although the architect was local, the artists worked on a national scale and would have been familiar with comparable work in London (e.g. G E Street's 1870s remodelling of the Guards Chapel at Wellington Barracks – Grade II*). The first church to be designed in this style was the Grade I listed St. Barnabas, Oxford by Arthur Blomfield in 1868-9 with exceptional painted and mosaic decoration by Heaton Butler and Bayne. Prothero was no doubt also familiar with J P Seddon's innovative design for St Catherine's Hoarwithy, Herefordshire (Grade I) and Eadie-Reid is best known for his sumptuous decoration at St Columba's Church, Southwick.⁷ Another well-known example of the Byzantine revival that may have provided inspiration was G E Street's San Paolo dentro le Mura in Rome (the American Church in Rome, 1872-76).

8.2.6 The current appearance of the church is evidence of the changing nature of worship with the use of movable chairs, television screens and musical groups as an alternative to the traditional choir and organ. The modern extensions to the south side is evidence of a range of ancillary meeting and office spaces that are needed by the Parish.

8.3 Historical Value

8.3.1 A heritage asset might illustrate a particular aspect of past life or it might be associated with a notable family, person, event or movement. These illustrative or associative values of a heritage asset may be less tangible than its evidential value but will often connect past people, events and aspects of life with the present.

8.3.2 Christ Church has high historical value for its place within the early 19th century development of Cheltenham. The land was given by the lawyer Pearson Thompson (1794-1872) who was responsible for much of the layout of Cheltenham from 1820 onwards. It was then bought by the local architect Robert Jearrad who completed the Lansdown development to his own designs as well as making a major contribution to the Regency architecture of the town with their Montpelier Arcade and Queens Hotel. Jearrad is also historically known for inventing a washing machine specifically for sterilisation in hospitals.

⁷ [Artist | St Columba Heritage](#)

8.3.3 Cheltenham became a fashionable place after George III and his family spent their holiday here in 1788. Development was rapid stimulated by the opening of more spas and the population grew from around 3000 in 1801 to 36,000 by 1841. The design of the Lansdown estate was started by J B Papworth for the landowner Pearson Thompson but the scheme was abandoned in 1825 due to a banking crisis. In 1830 Robert and Charles Jearrad took over all Thompson's developments. Overall Cheltenham is regarded as a remarkable piece of town planning with many fine public and private buildings and distinctive wide tree-lined streets. Accordingly, Christ Church has high historical value.

8.3.4 Cheltenham was known for its Evangelism, partly due to the inspiration of Rev Francis Close. His Parish Church was supplemented by additional churches including Holy Trinity (1820), St James (1825), St John (1827), St Paul (1829) and lastly Christ Church begun in 1837. All were in the Gothic style except St Paul which was neo-classical.

8.3.5 In terms of the later 19th century Christ Church has historical value as a work by the important Cheltenham based architect H A Prothero who together with the better known John Middleton was responsible for so many public and private buildings in the area through the practice Middleton, Prothero and Phillott.⁸ The decorative detail of the apse is the work of Sir William Richmond and James Eadie-Reid. Both were nationally significant artists working on major buildings throughout the country.

8.4 **Aesthetic Value**

8.4.1 This derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a heritage asset. This might include the form of a heritage asset, its external appearance and how it lies within its setting. It can be the result of conscious design or a seemingly fortuitous outcome of the way in which a heritage asset has evolved and been used over time, or it may be a combination of both. Inevitably, understanding the aesthetic value of a heritage asset will be more subjective than the study of its evidential and historical values. Much of it will involve trying to express the aesthetic qualities or the relative value of different parts of its form or design.

8.4.2 The aesthetic value of Christ Church is exceptionally high. It is immediately apparent from its dominant exterior appearance with its cathedral like Gothic portals and immensely tall west tower. Its focal

⁸ B E Torode, *John Middleton, Victorian Provincial Architect* (Zagreb, 2008)

position at the junction of Christ Church Road and Malvern Road adds to the aesthetic value of the church and its contribution to the wider area, where it can be seen from a considerable distance, e.g. from the south-west across the playing fields. The church was originally planned to be placed on higher ground further up Malvern Road and it is thought that the revised location to a narrower site facing down Christ Church Road may have led to the unusually stretched Gothic proportions. Sir John Betjeman observed this point in his *First and Last Loves* essays on architecture (published in 1969) where he commented that Christ Church is 'wildly incorrect, vaguely Gothic and with stupendous proportions all of its own'. The architect and architectural writer H S Goodhart Rendel described Christ Church as 'an outstanding fantasy in the style of a Staffordshire china ornament, that could stand on the largest chimneypiece in the world. There is also a tall Perpendicularish tower with a lamentable expression, you expect it to sob.'⁹ This very individual interpretation of Gothic on the exterior of Christ Church may not be to everyone's taste but it adds to its aesthetic value as it stimulates interest and architecturally sets the church apart from all others. Internally, in terms of the original church, the raked galleries with their box pews have high aesthetic value. There is less aesthetic value in the later 19th century pews to the nave together with the parquet floors, though their relative completeness is of definite interest.

8.4.3 There is also important aesthetic value derived from the entirely different late 19th century remodelling. Here the Byzantine apse creates a vista that is immediately striking on entering the church at the west end. It is of particular aesthetic interest for the confident way in which it remodelled the church in a different style without harming the Gothic Revival original. The quality of the painted and marble decoration is of the highest order and is further enhanced by the stained glass. The entire scheme is executed by some of the leading artists of the period. When the paint was fresh and not dulled by a century of dust and candle grease as it is now it must have been a dazzling sight. However, it is acknowledged that the use of tempera paint rather than mosaic has led to the decorative scheme being less durable with damp and condensation resulting in flaking of the surface and even the entire loss of some areas such as at low level on the south side. Conservation work is needed to arrest further loss of paint and ultimately diminution of aesthetic value. More durable mosaic was more typical of the best-known examples of the Byzantine revival as it combined with the Arts and Crafts Movement at the end of the 19th century

⁹ Verey and Brooks, p.232

such as Sidney Barnsley’s Lower Kingswood Church, Surrey.¹⁰ Here at Christ Church a rich use of coloured marbles is also seen in the contemporary pulpit, communion rails and choir screen.



Figure 65 Painted decoration to the apse



Figure 66 Evidence of progressive loss of painted decoration

¹⁰ T Sladen, *Byzantium in the chancel: surface decoration and the church interior*, in *Churches 1870-1914*, (The Victorian Society, 2011 pp.81-98)

8.4.4 Amongst the later work, Bryant Fedden's hanging cross is of particular note adding to the aesthetic value of the church. However, Robert Peterson's Lady chapel to the north transept, although of high-quality materials, has an uncomfortably deep canopy the position of which has an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the pre-existing neo-classical monuments that can no longer be read.

8.4.5 In terms of monuments, the large number of memorials by the local sculptor George Lewis is of aesthetic value as a group even though individually some are more significant than others. There is an especially large collection of 19th century monuments in the south transept but the aesthetic value of this part of the church is compromised by its use to store relocated choir stalls as well as a store area for modern furniture and chairs. Overall, to preserve aesthetic value, the eastern part of the church would benefit from a review of how movable items clearly needed for worship can be better stored.

8.5 Communal Value

8.5.1 This derives from the meanings that a heritage asset has for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. It is closely linked to historical and aesthetic values but tends to have additional or specific aspects. Communal value might be commemorative or symbolic. For example, people might draw part of their identity or collective memory from a heritage asset or have emotional links to it. Such values often change over time, and they may be important for remembering both positive and uncomfortable events, attitudes or periods in history. Heritage assets can also have social value, acting as a source of social interaction, distinctiveness or coherence, and also economic value, providing a valuable source of income or employment.

8.5.2 The parish church is a hugely important building for the community both for those who worship here and for those who merely experience passing it in their daily lives. It provides the community with a strong sense of the past and in many cases of their ancestors who are buried here. The church is also a place for many people's major memories and events and it has the expectation of remaining of exceptional communal value. Christ Church also has a number of ancillary spaces that provide opportunity for secular engagement with the community.

8.5.3 Christ Church also derives communal value from the fact that it is consciously designed as part of the wider development of the Lansdown area of Cheltenham. It was specifically intended to be a focal building at

an axial point in the street plan. It retains that townscape importance today.

8.6 **Summary of Significance**

This report has set out the required understanding of the historic character and significance of Christ Church, Cheltenham. It has described its second quarter 19th century origins at the time of rapid growth of the town and its late 19th century remodelling. The Gothic Revival of the original building and the Byzantine Revival of the remodelling are both striking in their own ways. Externally, the original church takes a highly individual approach to the Gothic Revival and creates a building of enormous townscape importance and architectural distinctiveness. Internally the raked galleries remain on three sides with their original pews. The east end was remodelled in a then fashionable Byzantine Revival manner and is an important example of this style designed by artists of national significance. The combination of the painted decoration, stained glass and coloured marbles creates an especially remarkable appearance.



APPENDIX Listed Building Designation entry

CHRIST CHURCH AND ADJACENT CHURCH HALL

Official list entry

Heritage Category: **Listed Building**

Grade: **II***

List Entry Number: **1103838**

Date first listed: **12-Mar-1955**

List Entry Name: **CHRIST CHURCH AND ADJACENT CHURCH HALL**

Statutory Address 1: **CHRIST CHURCH AND ADJACENT CHURCH HALL, MALVERN ROAD**

Details

CHELTENHAM

SO9422SW MALVERN ROAD 630-1/12/513 (East side) 12/03/55 Christ Church and adjacent Church Hall

GV II*

Church and Church Hall. 1837-40 with later additions and alterations. Architects: RW and C Jearrad. Builders: Thomas Newton, Solomon Sims and Joseph Puzey. Apse added and interior remodelled 1888-93 by JH Middleton, HA Prothero and Phillot with 'Byzantine' wall decoration by Sir William Richmond and J Eadie Reid. Stained glass by Lavers, Barrand and Westlake, and Heaton, Butler and Bayne. Monuments mostly by Lewis of Cheltenham. Restored by RW Paterson, 1956. Ashlar over brick with slate roof. PLAN: Regency Gothic in Early English style with a tall Perpendicular-type West tower symmetrically placed in the centre of an elaborately gabled west end with north and south porches, aisled nave, a single preaching box with north and south transepts and apsidal sanctuary; Classicized interior and Byzantine-style decorations to apse. Church Hall attached to south. EXTERIOR: west end: chamfered plinth, buttresses; stepped gabled buttresses to ends and centre with pinnacles, both porches and centre are gabled; outer entrances, pointed doorways have paired plank doors with pilaster between and cusped heads with quatrefoil to apex, 2 orders of roll-moulded arches and hoodmould; central stepped 3-lancet-light window with pilasters between and hollow-chamfer to head; above a clock to gable. Tower enriched with carved decoration, band, two 2-light belfry openings with Perpendicular-type tracery above, pierced parapet; octagonal turrets surmounted by finials with pinnacles. Aisles have tall 2-light lancet windows. Church Hall is single-storey with gable-facing to slightly projecting central gable in 3-bay facade.



Hood moulds over chamfered lancets, except stepped 3-light Early English window to centre, with moulded architraves and stylised Gothic carving to capitals set on engaged shafts. Plain but similar 3-light window to rear. INTERIOR: has 1837-40 gallery to 3 sides, 2 unclad iron stanchions with 'Gothic' capitals survive in their original form at the west end, those to both sides are Doric, with plinths (the iron stanchions are within); box pews remain to upper stage. Otherwise virtually all 1888-9, with exception of

1865 font. Apse has 2 arches with pilasters with arabesque ornament, tempera frescoes with Christ, the Apostles, St Michael and St George to the dome and the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity and Presentation to the walls and Resurrection to the reredos. Flat ceiling with oak panels on paired colonnette corbels to transepts. Porches each have open-well staircase with alternate stick and ornate balusters and wreathed handrail; north porch has further spiral staircase. Ornate screen to choir. Coloured marble pulpit. Many wall tablets to members of the military who had served in India and the East India Company who retired to Cheltenham, including James Webster (d.1858) of Hatherley Court, Hatherley Road (qv) also Richard Crosier Sherwood (d.1850) of Suffolk Lawn. Interior of Church Hall not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: ashlar wall with pointed arch attached to Church Hall on south. HISTORICAL NOTE: built as a proprietary chapel to accommodate about 2,000 in anticipation of the expansion of the Lansdown Estate. The architects, RW and C Jearrad were building the Queen's Hotel, Promenade (qv) concurrently. The distinctive and unusual proportions have attracted the attention of many architectural writers: Sir John Betjeman wrote that this is, 'one of the most successful buildings in Cheltenham externally.' (Sampson A and Blake S: A Cheltenham Companion: Cheltenham: 1993:-: 28,69; Blake S: Cheltenham's Churches and Chapels AD 773-1883: Cheltenham: 1979:-: 28-29; Rowe G: Illustrated Cheltenham Guide 1850: Cheltenham: 1845-1969: 32; Whiting R: Christ Church, Cheltenham 1840-1990: 1990-; The Buildings of England: Verey D: Gloucestershire: The Vale and The Forest of Dean: London: 1970:-: 127-28; Sladen T: Notes: 1995-).

