

# **Statement of Significance –**

## **Installation of a Post box**

### **The Church of St John the Evangelist, Washingborough**



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

The church of St John the Evangelist, Washingborough, a Grade II\* Listed Building, has an attractive setting surrounded by the village, but in a way also hidden from the village because of the spaciousness of the graveyard and the surrounding trees. It has a striking location on the south side on the valley of the River Witham, with the graveyard being higher on the south and lower on the north.

The boundary of the churchyard is formed, for the most part, by old stone walls although wooden panel fencing is prevalent on the northern boundary and also part of the western boundary. Neighbouring buildings, with particular reference to the Washingborough Hall Hotel to the south and residential properties flanking the entrance to the churchyard, are built of stone of appearance which is highly compatible with that of the church.

Access to the churchyard is primarily via an entrance on the eastern side. At this entrance there is a pair of Grade II Listed cast iron gates with ornate, foliate cresting and square gate piers with decorative openwork sides, manufactured by Harrisons of Beverley and installed in 1834. A further entrance to the churchyard is afforded by a gate providing access to the grounds of neighbouring Washingborough Hall, the former rectory. This gate is used chiefly for providing direct access to the church by residents staying at or using the Hall for occasions such as weddings and funerals.

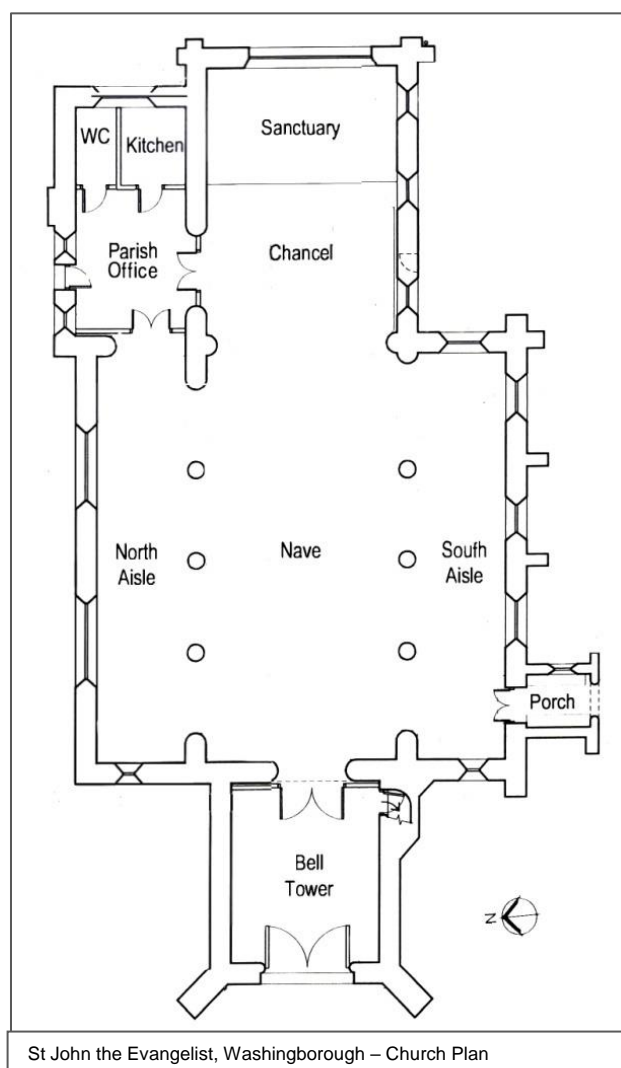


Grade II Listed Cast Iron Gates and Gatepiers



At the church's west end there is a massive and attractive three-stage tower of dressed stone with diagonal corner buttresses, with pinnacles on the tops of the battlemented parapets. The earliest bells, of which there are three, were installed in 1589. To these were added a further three in 1713 and two more in 1896. Major refurbishment work was undertaken in 1998 to re-hang the bells in a modern galvanised steel frame. The eight-bell peal is considered one of the finest in the county and regularly attracts guest campanologists in addition to having a thriving team of regular bell ringers.

The second stage of the tower houses the clock mechanism which was built by W. Thomas of Lincoln and installed in 1842. The clock face is located on the east wall of the tower.



The church walls are of coursed oolitic limestone but with dressed stones around the various structural openings. On the south there is a porch for the main entrance and there are north and south aisles to the nave, a chancel on the east and a vestry on the north. Internally the stonework of the walls has not been plastered except at high level in the chancel and in the vestry. Consequently there is a very grand medieval appearance internally. The timber structures of the roofs are on show to form the ceilings. The stone floors have been covered with carpet generally, but there are flagstones on show near the tower.

The church boasts a fine selection of stained glass windows the oldest of which is believed to be the chancel's east window, this being a five-light pointed arched window depicting scenes from the life of Christ. On the south wall of the chancel there are three tall, two-light lancets bearing dates from 1864 to 1875. One three-light and two two-light pointed arched windows in the south aisle are similarly dated. The north aisle boasts two large, three-light, pointed arched windows provided by A.L. Moore & Son in 1918. The north and south sides of the clerestory each have four windows with diamond shaped openings depicting Zeppelin airships as a memorial to mark a

bombing raid on Washingborough on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1916. Other stained glass windows are located in the east wall of the south aisle, the west walls of the tower and both aisles, and also the north wall of the vestry.

A 12<sup>th</sup>-Century Norman, drum-shaped font is the oldest item in the church. There are numerous antiquities worthy of particular note, including a Gothic Perpendicular period oak chest within which are stored various ancient copies of bibles and prayer books dating back to 1772. There is a 17<sup>th</sup>-Century communion rail. Also noteworthy are 18<sup>th</sup>-Century items including a further oak chest, a George III Royal Coat of Arms on the west wall of the nave and, in the chancel, a Georgian ornate chandelier.

Beneath the east window, behind the altar, there is a reredos comprising five panels each containing a figure painted on a slate tablet. It is believed these paintings are the work of Belgian soldiers who, in 1916, were quartered in Washingborough Hall which at that time was the Rectory.

The oldest monument in church, located in the floor of sanctuary, is a 14<sup>th</sup>-Century fine demi-figure of a lady praying, shown in sunk relief in a cusped framing.

Other floor slabs, of plainer design, in the nave include those for Jacob Bateman (date of death 1686), Elizabeth Pallisser (1719), and Everard Buckworth (1792).



The Sanctuary

Wall monuments in the chancel include those to Sir Peter Eure (date of death 1664), featuring an inscription in convex oval with at the foot an incised still-life of death, Rudolphus Eure (1661) and Ann Rudgard (1844) which includes a profile portrait.

Wall monuments in the nave include those to Thomas Holland (date of death 1779), Francis Rudgard (1863) and Ann Curtois (1898). On the north wall there is a War Memorial featuring figures of a soldier and a sailor made out of Lincolnshire alabaster.

Particularly noteworthy items of church plate include a silver-gilt set dated 1869, comprising a chalice, flagon, paten and raised pattern, and also a silver chalice dated 1916. In regular use there are a brass alms dish dated 1869 and two brass vases dated 1889.

The churchyard is wholly within a Conservation Area designated by North Kesteven District Council. It is bounded on all sides by the built environment comprising private residential properties and the grounds of Washingborough Hall Hotel and The Ferryboat Inn.

There have been no sightings of protected species, such as reptiles or small mammals, within the boundary of the churchyard. Whilst in the past there have been reports of bat sightings there are no indications of any current occupation. There are no surface watercourses within the churchyard itself thereby precluding by such means incursion by protected species. Various species of wild bird are clearly evident at all times although the dominant one takes the form of a substantial population of jackdaws roosting in the walls of the church tower.

The churchyard is grassed throughout and maintained through regular cutting in keeping with expressed aesthetic expectations for an established residential, rather than rural, area. No protected floras have been identified although there are a number of attractive trees including a blue Atlas cedar and an acer. There are no TPOs relating to trees within the churchyard. However, TPOs do apply to trees on adjacent properties some of which overhang the churchyard on its south and west boundaries.

The earliest record of a Rector at St John's Church, Washingborough, is that for Martin de Pateshill who was installed in 1218.

The church underwent restoration by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1859 and by Scott & Goddard in 1861-2.



View from the ringing chamber in the tower showing the nave, north and south aisles and chancel

Over recent decades there has been a series of improvements to facilities in order to preserve and enhance the church's attractiveness for both worship and other activities in support of mission and ministry.

During 2000 an electronic, computer controlled, organ was installed to replace the traditional pipe organ. This initiative allowed the creation of the current vestry which is used for meetings and also for the ministry team when preparing for services. A kitchen and toilet were also installed to provide improved amenities and thereby enhance the appeal of the church as a venue for visiting choirs, bands and other outreach activities.

The church has conventional lighting and electrical heating systems which meet the basic needs of those attending services. Consideration is being given to replacing these systems with more modern and efficient alternatives in order to improve comfort levels and reduce electricity consumption.

The church has been consistently well maintained over recent decades. The most recent Quinquennial Inspection in 2011 reported on the urgent need for restoration work to the tower roof, involving the replacement of leadwork and timber structures and the repair of stone structures, which were completed in 2014. Longer-term needs also identified in the report, such as for certain stonework to be re-pointed and for rainwater goods to be redecorated, have also been addressed.

The church is well connected to the local community not only in respect of current work to improve engagement with local schools but also in terms of maintaining long-standing relationships with local branches of organisations including the Mothers' Union, the Royal British Legion, the Scout Association and the Guide Association.

The church's setting and facilities are clearly valued not only by those regularly attending church but also more generally by the local community, whether serving as a reference point for those worshipping, tending graves or seeking quiet space to reflect, or providing a fitting and memorable context for hosting life events such as baptisms, weddings and funerals.

As the largest place of worship in our Benefice, there is plenty of scope to use the building for new ministry and mission. There is also great scope for the church to become more integrated into the parish, so that residents of all ages might experience the church as a centre of community life.

**Section 2: The significance of the church, including its contents and churchyard.**

It is considered that the church is of **Moderate Significance**.

Taking into account the church's setting, medieval architecture, and wealth of fixtures, fittings and articles, it is evident that it provides a highly valued contribution to the preservation of knowledge regarding local spiritual and societal histories and also artisanal craftsmanship.

In addition, the church is important regionally, particularly in respect of certain monuments such as the fine medieval demi-figure of a lady praying, shown in sunk relief in a cusped framing in the floor of the sanctuary, the wide range of its stained glass windows and the quality of the eight-bell peal.

The church is a Grade II\* Listed Building and the gates on the eastern boundary of the churchyard are Grade II Listed.

Much of the church is of Early English Gothic origin.

The tower arch is dated to around 1190, although the lower stages of the tower reflect earlier Transitional period work such as the spacious west doorway and south west respond. The four heavy buttresses to the tower are of Perpendicular Gothic style as are the stair turret, tower top with its eight pinnacles, and west window.

Exhibiting characteristics of Early English and Decorative Gothic styles are the piers supporting the nave and aisles, the chancel arch and, in the chancel, the sedilia and piscina.

The former north chapel, now vestry, is primarily in the Decorative Gothic style. A low-sided window and door on the south side of the chancel are also crafted in the style of Decorative.

The churchyard contains monuments which legibly detail the names individuals who lived as long ago as in the 18<sup>th</sup>-Century, although it is believed that the land has been used for burials since the 12<sup>th</sup>-Century.

The church therefore encapsulates much of the history of the local area by serving as a valuable repository of artefacts and by demonstrating craftsmanship through the ages from the 12<sup>th</sup>-Century Transitional and Early English Gothic styles.

From a more contemporary perspective, the setting and attributes of the church frequently attract attention from visiting groups interested in viewing places of worship, particularly in respect of experiencing the glorious stained glass windows for a building of its size. The quality of the eight-bell peal also attracts bell ringing teams from across the county. The Parish Office, located in St John's Church as detailed on a previous faculty application, serves as a hub for the three churches in the Benefice, namely St John the Evangelist, Washingborough, St Thomas's, Heighington and All Saints, Canwick. The office is manned daily each morning and coordinates all life events (Weddings, Funerals and Baptisms) and provides necessary printing and internet services to support the Benefice in outreach and mission. It allows the church to be open and encourages people to visit and engage with the church in the community. As such the Parish Office now regularly receives post but this is delivered in a somewhat "ad-hoc" fashion depending if the office is manned when the delivery takes place.

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

The proposal is to install a post box on the gate at the entrance to the churchyard, so that post may be reliably received by the parish office staff. This is a necessary requirement to enable the Parish Office to function properly.

A cast iron post box has been sourced that is in keeping with the current fabric of the cast iron gates at the entrance of the churchyard. The post box will be fixed to the gate by means of a clamp plate. No welding or other such permanent arrangement will be employed and it would be entirely possible to remove the post box without causing any damage to the gate.

It is therefore concluded that installing the post box in the manner outlined above, will not impact to any material extent on the significance of the church or the gate.

**Section 4: Sources Consulted / Bibliography:**

1. 'The Buildings of England – Lincolnshire', by Nikolas Pevsner and John Harris (Second edition, dated 1989, revised by Nicholas Antram).
2. Historic England website for Listed Buildings information.
3. Church Monuments Society website.
4. Environmental Compliance & Enforcement, North Kesteven District Council.
5. Church Terrier & Inventory, St John the Evangelist, Washingborough, dated April 2001 and subsequent updates.
6. ChurchCare Guidance Note 'Statements of Significance and Statements of Needs'.
7. Quinquennial Inspection Report dated July 2011 by GMS Architecture Ltd.
8. 'The Church of St John the Evangelist, Washingborough' 3<sup>rd</sup> edition dated 2004.
9. Washingborough with Heighington Parish Profile dated 2014.
10. Archived correspondence held in church, such as that dated September 1967 from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government conferring Listed Status.