

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, WHITTLESEY



Aerial view of St Andrew's, Whittlesey

Part I – The Church in its environment

St Andrew's Church is commonly known as the 'low' church within the town of Whittlesey due to the fact that it doesn't have a spire but has a beautiful pinnacled tower. It dates back to the 13th and 14th centuries and consists of a tower, nave, chancel, chapels and aisles. These, together with the chancel, were extended and rebuilt at varying dates through to the 15th century, and a vigorous interior restoration occurred during the 19th Century (1872 – architect: R.R. Rowe), the south porch was also added. The material is rubble, ochre sandstone and Barnack ashlar, and the roofs are covered with lead except those of the chapels, which are slated. Originally the two churches of Whittlesey belonged to the two great abbeys in the region: St Mary was under the control of Ramsey, while St Andrew belonged to Ely. St Andrew's Church is a Grade II* listed building and is situated at the western end of Whittlesey with its east wall on the pavement but with its other three sides set within a delightful churchyard. The west tower is richly decorated: there are clasp buttresses on the corners which are decorated at the top of the first stage with a line of battlements, and the parapet of the tower itself is also battlemented with four little pinnacles on the corners. The aisles are broad and battlemented, and there's a nice south porch with more little spires and three niches over the doorway. At the end of the south aisle is a chapel, built of slightly better quality stone than the rest. The windows are square-

headed, with sober curvilinear tracery in the tops, and there are more decorated buttresses in the corners. The grass and flower beds are well tended and 10 London Plane trees were planted to replace the ageing horse chestnut trees. The gravestones have been lined up in rows and mostly date back to the 17th century; an area has been set aside for cremated remains. Overall the churchyard gives an air of peace and tranquillity. Fenland District Council have responsibility for the maintenance of the churchyard.

Moving on to the Church itself, it consists of a west tower, nave, chancel, north and south aisles, north and south chapels and a south porch, built in a honey-coloured stone. The church tower houses the bell chamber, has a clock face on the eastern side and has a line of castellations all round the top. Below the castellations on each corner are gargoyle waterspouts. On the west wall there is a doorway which shows the Tudor influences although the doors themselves are quite new, of light wood and varnished. East from the tower runs the clerestory as far as the chancel arch, it has a gable roof with castellations on the north and south sides and at the east end the gable is finished with a cross. The chancel roof is lower than that of the nave, the east window is the largest in the church and depicts the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ in beautiful stained glass. Both the Chancel and Nave Roofs have been re-leaded and the roofs to the two Chapels have also been re-slatted (2011).

A ramp has been constructed out of tarmac (2011) to enable easy access. Entering through the south porch the Church is surprisingly open and light which is largely due to the many windows of clear glass. The nave is tall and has wide high arches. Above this is the oak roof. The walls are covered with a limewash and were decorated in 2011.

Housed in the tower are the church's impressive eight bells, two of these being modern, cast by Gillett and Johnston in 1930. The other six were cast by Joseph Eayre of St Neots. Five of these dated from 1759, with the inscription on one of the bells reading 'These five bells was cast May the 12 1759'. A sixth was added by the same founder in 1769 with the bell having the wonderful inscription 'I to the church the living call and to the grave do summon all'. Three of the Eayre bells were taken down in exchange for three bells from Thomas Mears II in 1843 and one of the remaining Eayre bells was re-cast by Gillett and Johnston in 1911. Work is being carried out to the rimming of the bells by members of the Ely Bell Restoration Fund (2021).

Within the entrance area there is an 18th Century chest. The font can be found in the nave and is made of plain stone with a painted wooden covering. It has been refurbished (2012) and is lined with lead. Towards the chancel arch is a beautiful oak pulpit with carved panels, this was donated to the Church in 1916 as a memorial to Lieut. J D Smalley. As you enter through the chancel you see before you the great east window which dominates the area. It is of late Decorated or early Perpendicular style and its tracery is intricately wrought. The beauty and colour of this window is all the more startling because of the absence of coloured glass elsewhere in the church. Beneath the window is placed the high

altar, dating back to 1928. The altar rails, pews and choir stalls date from the 1872 restoration or later.

The organ, made by James J Binns of Bramley Leeds, was restored in 1947 and moved in the 1950's from its original setting at the side of the chancel in the north aisle. It now resides at the back of the aisle in the nave and the choir stalls are situated in front of the organ and behind the main body of the Church. It is perhaps unique in its setting but adds to the charm of the dwelling.

The choir vestry is situated at the base of the tower, just below the ringing chamber and is unremarkable. The clergy vestry is small with a chipboard screen painted white and sits in the north-west corner of the church. It houses the safes where the registers and church silver are kept.



East Window and Chancel of St Andrew's, Whittlesey

Address: Church St, Whittlesey, PE7 1DD

Part of the Benefice of Whittlesey, Pondersbridge and Coates
in the Deanery of MARCH.

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

The Wooden Pews

The pews date from the restoration of 1872 or later and are made out of Victorian pine. It has been commented that they are uncomfortable to sit on and have a tendency now to throw out splinters of wood.

We are proposing to remove five of these pews from the north-west corner of the church, and to permanently flip two of these pews around to create a 'Children's Corner' in the south aisle.