



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND



# Statement of Significance ST WILFRID'S CHURCH, GRAPPENHALL, Cheshire

September 2021

## Form 1A (Rules 3.2 and 4.6) - Standard Information

**Diocese of Chester**  
**Church of St Wilfrid**  
**In the Parish of Grappenhall**

Approximate date of church	1120
Is the church listed?	Yes
If so, please state whether it is grade I, II* or II	1
Is the church, churchyard or any adjoining structure wholly or partly scheduled as an ancient monument?	No
Is the church, churchyard or any adjoining structure in a conservation area?	Yes
If it is, please state which	The church and churchyard reside within Grappenhall Village Conservation Area
Is the church, churchyard or any adjoining structure in a national park?	No
If it is, please state which	N/A
Is there any evidence that bats use the church, its curtilage or any adjoining structure?	No
Please give details of any privately owned chapels, aisles or windows	N/A
Name of lay rector, if known	Diocesan role
Is the churchyard or burial ground consecrated?	Yes
Is the churchyard or burial ground still used for burials?	Yes
If the churchyard or burial grounds is no longer used for burials has it been closed by Order in Council?	No
If it has, please give the date of the Order	N/A
Are there any graves that are identified as war graves by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission?	Yes
Please identify any historic structures, listed tombs, war memorials or significant trees in the churchyard or burial ground	Sundial in front of porch (1714)
Please give the name and address of the architect or surveyor appointed for the church under the Inspection of Churches Measure 1955	Mark Pearce, Kulczyk, Pearce, Sanderson 75 Wilmslow Road Wilmslow SK9 3EN

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Office or position held: .....

### Section 1: The church in its urban / rural environment.

#### 1.1 Setting of the Church

Grappenhall is listed in the Domesday survey as a small rural township with 6 adult male inhabitants. In 1881, around the time of the last major building improvement to St Wilfrid's Church, the civil parish had grown to 788 adults. By 2011 the civil parish had 9,700<sup>4</sup> inhabitants. The population continues to grow, as the village is gradually enveloped by the growing conurbation of Warrington.

The oldest part of Grappenhall is the picturesque village centre on Church Lane. This linear settlement of intimate scale creates a strong and traditional village character, now a Conservation Area, comprising a mixture of mainly 17th to 19th Century buildings, which display a wide range of architectural styles and supporting features. Church Lane is partly cobbled and is flanked on its south side by substantial sandstone boundary walls. The focal point of the village is St. Wilfrid's Church. It is constructed in local sandstone and parts of it date back to the 12th century<sup>1</sup>.

The setting of the ancient church within the conservation area provides a reassuring sense of the continuity of Christian worship, and rural peace in a rapidly urbanising landscape.

#### 1.2 The Living Churchyard

The northern and eastern sides of the churchyard are fringed with trees which border the Bridgewater Canal, St Wilfrid's Primary School and the District Scout Campsite. As the church is part of the Grappenhall Village Conservation Area, all of the trees are protected.

No rare, protected or unusual flora or fauna have been reported in the churchyard.

#### 1.3 Social History

The church continues to be the sole, local Parish Church for the people of Grappenhall, as it has been for over 800 years. Perhaps its greatest cultural and religious significance is this record of continual service to local people. In 1068 Grappenhall was waste<sup>8</sup>, but the Normans were enthusiastic church builders, and early in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, local masons were commissioned to create a small stone church which today forms the foundation of the present, mostly 16<sup>th</sup> century, building.

The church has a plaque with a continuous record of Rectors of Grappenhall going back to Robert of Gropenhale, who is known to have witnessed a charter in 1189<sup>9</sup>. Throughout the turmoil of the reformation, civil war and then the 20<sup>th</sup> century aerial bombing that hit much of the Mersey valley, Grappenhall people have treasured their church and protected its artefacts. Today, babies can be christened in the Norman font, which was saved from destruction by being buried during the reformation. Visiting schoolchildren (and distinguished historians) can see the fragile windows that in 1316 the Boydell family installed to illustrate their honoured Saints.

The churchyard originally only ran to the south of the church, as shown on the 1828 Tithe Map<sup>7</sup>. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, additional land was purchased on the North side (in several tranches) to extend the churchyard and enable the vestry to be built. <sup>2</sup>

It is an active churchyard, which is well maintained by volunteers known as God's Gardeners. The oldest memorial, dated 1624, is of the Drinkwater family of Thelwall. This is on the south side of the church. Church burial registers date back to 1574 and are preserved in Cheshire Records Office. The graveyard is actively used by the congregation and local

## 1 The church in its urban/rural environment

residents. There are no grave memorials to people who have achieved national fame. A plaque was erected in Victorian times, commemorating Thomas Danyers of Appleton who fought heroically with the Black Prince at Crecy (1346), recapturing the prince's standard.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Danyers is an ancestor of the Leghs of Lyme. Thomas Peter Legh of Lyme was a major landowner in Grappenhall until his "Moiety of the Manor or Lordship of Grappenhall" was sold in 1827, however Grappenhall is not the established burial place of the Leghs of Lyme.

Around the Church there are reminders of the generosity of parishioners through the centuries, from the 12<sup>th</sup> century Parish Chest; the Jacobean oak table; the Bells dating back to 1700; a fine 19<sup>th</sup> century oak carving depicting the Last Supper and a similarly oak carved lectern and pulpit through to some Church Plate, donated within the last 50 years<sup>2</sup>. Their significance is that they provide tangible evidence that St Wilfrid's continues to serve local people and be cherished by them.

### 1.4 The church building in general

The Norman church (circa 1120) was extended in 1334 with the addition of the Boydell Chapel, to the south. Virtually all of the Norman church was demolished in the rebuilding that was organised by the rector Richard Gerrard from 1527. The Norman corbel table and the foundations along the line of the original nave were retained as a support for the roof pillars. The Tudor restoration retained the south wall of the Boydell chapel and much of the 14<sup>th</sup> century glass. The tower and most of the present outline of the building were established in 1525. The vestry was added in 1851 and quite extensive, mainly internal changes were made in 1874, supervised by the Rector, Thomas Greenall.

In Summary:

Church, C12 (nave and corbel-table), 1334 (South Chapel), 1525-39 (tower and most of fabric), 1834 and 1874 (clerestory). Red sandstone with slate roof. West tower, aisled nave with south chapel, chancel, vestry and north transept. Tower of 3 stages has Tudor-arched west door, restored 4-light west window with panel tracery, diagonal west buttresses and square east buttresses, paired bell-openings with quatrefoil heads and crenelation. Aisle windows have round-headed mullioned lights. South chapel has reticulated tracery. Clerestory windows have paired round-headed lights. Vestry constructed in 1850 with east window (moved from chancel) has 5 lights with panel tracery. The south porch and north transept are probably 1874, by Paley and Austin.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.5 The church building in detail

The foundations of the 1120 church lie within the present nave and chancel.<sup>2</sup> The North aisle, the outer wall of which would form the inner wall of the extension, was added during the Tudor rebuilding in (1525- 1539).

In 1539 the tower appears to have been built before the north wall, as the north east buttress runs down to the ground and the west wall of the north aisle has been built to meet this with a straight joint without ties.<sup>2</sup> Visible on the tower is a relief sculpture of a "Cheshire Cat"<sup>1</sup> which may have inspired the young Charles Dodgson (aka Lewis Carroll), whose father was vicar of the nearby Daresbury church. There is an inverted V shaped marking on the tower showing where the roof beams of the original St Wilfrid's School were attached in 1712. The school relocated to its present building in 1846.<sup>2</sup>

The piers of the arcade at the south side of the north aisle were found, in 1873, to be resting on the foundations of the north wall of the Norman church. The original corbel table, which once supported the Norman roof, can be seen above the arches of the south aisle, with its ornamentation of rudely carved gargoyles. Cheshire has very little Norman

## 1 The church in its urban/rural environment

stonework as, in Norman times, it was the poorest county in England<sup>10</sup>. In that context, the building has major regional significance.

In 1851 the vestry was thrown out to the North, converting the east end of the north aisle into a transept. The church is built of local red sandstone from the now closed, Cobb's quarry near Lumb Brook.<sup>2</sup> The 1874 reconstruction was the last major change to the church, when amongst other changes, most of the pews were removed.

### 1.6 Contents of the Church

Interior. - Continuous nave and chancel of 7 bays with 6-bay aisles. Octagonal pillars with plainly moulded caps carry double-chamfered arches. Easternmost the highly significant south window of south aisle has C14 glass (re-arranged 1834) depicting St. John Baptist, St. Thomas, St. Bartholomew (flayed, carrying his skin over right arm), St. Mary Magdalene, St. James (or a pilgrim), St. Philip and an unidentified saint. The east window of south aisle is by Mayer of Munich and London. Fragments of medieval glass elsewhere.

Other regionally significant contents include the stone effigy in chancel (north side) of Sir William Boydell, died 1275, found in churchyard and placed in church 1874, restored. Norman arcaded rectangular font, found in churchyard and reinstated in nave 1874. C13 dugout chest. Peel of 8 bells: 5 by Bagley of Ecton Northants 1700, one by Richard Sanders 1718, the treble recast by J. Taylor of Loughborough 1890 and the 4th by Mears and Stainbank, who supplied 2 new bells, 1890.<sup>3</sup> In 2018 the bell frame was replaced and a peel of 10 bells installed by J. Taylor of Loughborough. The 2 oldest bells are retained on the bell frame but are no longer in operational use, the other bells were recast to create our new 10 bell peel. A camera and display screen were installed in the Tower to help with bell ringer training.

### 1.7 Significance for mission

The building is very actively used as the Parish Church with a regular Sunday congregation averaging more than 200 people, which has been growing rapidly by about 40% since 2011 and is expected to grow further. In 2017 the government Housing Agency (HHA) was granted outline planning permission for 400 homes at Grappenhall Heys to provide urgently needed housing.

The ministry to children is particularly important for safeguarding the long-term future of both worship at St Wilfrid's and the historic building. Baptisms are currently in excess of 50 a year. The Preschool Praise group regularly attracts up to 30 children and their carers to worship on Wednesday afternoons. However, on Sundays the provision of a temporary crèche made from a circle of chairs at the west end of the church, is not a satisfactory solution for children, their parents or other members of the congregation. It can be noisy, and parents find it impractical to take their toddlers outside, cross a cobbled street and walk round into another building when a toilet is required. In 2020 Preschool Praise has been translated to the internet which children and their extended families can enjoy. They have now resumed using the church are all looking forward to being able to use the annex which has just completed construction.

Strenuous and sustained efforts have been made to offer age-appropriate worship to children aged 5-11 in the Parish Centre across the road. However, the correct provision needs to be in the right place. Attendances at the Parish Centre dwindled to the point when children's services in the Parish Centre stopped in 2014.

## 1 The church in its urban/rural environment

Some 400 St Wilfrid's School pupils regularly attend mid-week or termly services, and attendances of the under 16s at regular Sunday worship show that there is a continued and growing potential for age-appropriate worship. Links have also been established with other schools in the Parish. They welcome the opportunity to make use of the new Annex with its meeting room, toilets and audio-visual facilities to extend children's learning opportunities.

Another significant group of facilities for the mission of the church is those that support the frailer members of the congregation. 22.4% of Grappenhall residents are aged 65+<sup>4</sup>. Loneliness has been identified as a significant social need, particularly amongst the 20-25% of residents in Grappenhall who are aged 65+<sup>5</sup>. Good a/v facilities are important to people attending church and also those who are participating via the internet linked to their TV.

With the new audio-visual facilities, the church can more fully address the needs of churchgoers and the community of Grappenhall, so this **historic building** will be **cherished** and **sustained** by Grappenhall people – thus fulfilling the St Wilfrid's vision for the future of this church.

## 2 The significance of the area affected by the proposal

### Section 2 : The significance of the area affected by the proposal.

#### 2.1 Identify the parts of the church and/or churchyard which will be directly or indirectly affected by your proposal.

Only minimal physical changes will be required to the interior of the church to fit in the proposed addition to the audio-visual equipment to enable the whole cancel to be used for streamed services. The 2 pieces of equipment will be fitted on either side of the choir.

The small shelf high on the wall behind the pillar at the back of the north aisle can be attached using screws into the mortar. The wiring will be within existing ducting.

#### 2.2 Set out the significance of these particular parts.



A screen is installed on the masonry between the arches.

The bracket can be secured without damaging the stonework by using 2 steel bars which are attached using fixing points in the mortar between the stones. The screen would be slightly higher than could be reached by the young man in the photo. There is a slightly higher line of masonry which would enable the screen to be attached so it does not protrude beyond the arch.

There is no requirement for any drilling into the masonry. Only the 8cm wide edge of the screens at the sides of the choir will be visible in the view down the nave towards the altar.

### Section 3: Assessment of the impact of the proposals

#### 3.1 Describe and assess the impact of your proposal on these parts, and on the whole.

- (i) The screens have a thin black surround and are shaped to facilitate reading from them at an angle. Low impact.
  
- (ii) The overall impact of the proposal will not change the street view of the historic church from the Conservation Area nor will it make a significant change to the Church interior. The new facilities will give new life to the ancient building and enhance its value as a working Parish Church, serving the needs of the people of Grappenhall.

#### 3.2 Explain how you intend, where possible, to mitigate the impact of the proposed works on the significance of the parts affected and the whole.

- i. The equipment will be inconspicuously coloured as will the wiring runs and the steel bars used to attach the screens to the masonry.

#### **Sources consulted**

- 1 Parish of Grappenhall and Thelwall – Village Design Statement 2004
- 2 St Wilfrid’s Grappenhall by Gordon Berry, published 1989, revised 2000
- 3 Historic England website - Church of St Wilfrid’s Grappenhall
- 4 Grappenhall Ward profile, published by Warrington Borough Council, 2015
- 5 NHS/Warrington BC JSNA Loneliness and social isolation 2013
- 6 Map of burials in St Wilfrid’s graveyard
- 7 Tithe Commutation Map 1826/7
- 8 Cheshire Archives translation of the Domesday Book
- 9 G. Omerod History of the County Palatine and City of Chester 1882
- 10 Cheshire under the Norman Earls 1066-1237 B.M.C. Husain 1973
- 11 Archaeological Evaluation April 2018 Matrix Archaeology