

ST WOOLLOS CATHEDRAL, NEWPORT: PROTECTION TO NORTH GULLY

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1.0 Brief description of the Cathedral building and its setting:

- 1.1 The Cathedral Church of St Woollos is built on top of a ridge which dominates the city of Newport. It is one of the most ancient foundations of any church in Wales and represents a rich dossier of architectural history stretching from Saxon times right through to the twenty first century. It is Grade I listed.



The Cathedral building on its elevated ridge, as seen from the north.



- 1.2 The first church was a small wooden building on this ancient site at the top of Stow Hill around the year 500 by Gwynllyw, Lord of Gwynllwg (later Anglicised to Woolos). The present Galilee Chapel, also known as St Mary's Chapel, at the west end of the Cathedral is said to be on the site of the original church, and retains some pre-Conquest masonry. Around 1080, a Norman nave of 5 bays was added. St Mary's Chapel was raised in height around 1200. In the fifteenth century, following damage when Newport was razed by Owain Glyndwr, aisles were added, as well as a 2-story south porch, and the west tower, known as the Jasper Tower, after Jasper Tudor (uncle of Henry VII), who was responsible for some of the work and Governor of Newport from 1485 to 1495.
- 1.3 During the seventeenth century the Cathedral was re-ordered and adapted to Puritanism. The body of the church was given box pews, the monuments removed, the Galilee Chapel became a charnel house and the demolished rood screen was replaced by a singing gallery, which was served from the former rood screen turret staircase. The overall effect was to cut off the chancel from the rest of the church. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the church looked more like a nonconformist chapel, with two semi-ruinous appendages at either end.
- 1.4 In 1818/19 the Galilee Chapel was restored; it ceased to be a charnel house and formed the main entrance to the church.
- 1.5 1853 saw a major restoration by architects WG and E Haberschon of London. The south door was opened and the two-storey porch was reduced in height. The two large windows in the south aisle were replaced with three smaller ones. New tracery was put into the tower window, which serves as the west window to the Galilee Chapel and all the other windows were restored. The semi-ruinous chancel was almost completely rebuilt, a vestry built on its north side and two late medieval square windows on the nave side of the chancel were uncovered and preserved. The singing gallery was demolished, and a new chancel arch built. The floors were excavated and replaced with concrete to prevent damp. The roof structures were exposed by removing firstly the boarding and then the plaster, which is how it is seen today.
- 1.6 In 1870, a pinnacle falling from the tower and through the roof of the Galilee Chapel, instigated another restoration. The ceiling was boarded, the walls were stuccoed and the pavement repaired. The organ gallery at the west end of the nave, including the steps to it in the Galilee Chapel, was removed.
- 1.7 In 1885 a new heating and ventilating system was installed, and churchyard relandscaped to provide access from Clifton Road to the tower doorway.
- 1.8 Another full restoration took place in 1913 under the architect William Davies. A new Vestry was built, the nineteenth century roof boarding was removed throughout, possibly because of woodworm, and the font was moved to its present position in the Galilee Chapel. In the southwest corner of the chapel an ancient doorway was uncovered and the nineteenth century plaster removed from the walls.
- 1.9 The Diocese of Monmouth was created in 1921, and the church became the Pro-Cathedral in 1929, obtaining full Cathedral status in 1949.
- 1.10 The chancel was demolished and rebuilt, on a larger scale under the architect Alban Caroe, completed in 1962.
- 1.11 The east window and mural were designed by John Piper, the mural being painted by scenery painters of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and the glass made by Patrick

Reyntiens. Below are vestries, an office, kitchen and toilets. In 1991 a modest sized hall was added on the north side, designed by AJ Beer.

1.12 In May 2021, the Cathedral ceased to be a parish church with the dissolving of the parish. The PCC was also abolished, and the Cathedral Chapter became the sole governing body.

1.13 Despite the great age of the building, on a site that has been in use as a place of worship and teaching for 1500 years, there are no records of any below ground archaeological evaluation.

2.0 **Assessment of significance: Cathedral grounds:**

2.1 Much is written of the significance of the Cathedral building itself. However, for the purposes of this application, an assessment of the Cathedral grounds is relevant to the proposal. There is considerably less documented about the Cathedral grounds, although we know there is a significant history of building on this site, from the historical narrative.

2.2 Significant burials in the churchyard include ten Chartists, shot in the 'Newport Rising' on 4th November 1839. They are in an unmarked grave. One Chartist supporter is in a marked grave, John Partridge, the printer of their pamphlets, who died in 1844.



Memorial stone to the unmarked graves of Chartist supporters, shot on 4th November 1839, mounted within a retaining wall within the western churchyard.

2.3 The early twentieth century lychgate is listed separately; Grade II. It consists of brown stone walls with buff stone dressings, wooden gates and a timber-framed superstructure supporting a gabled tiled roof.

2.4 Paintings dating back to the 1850s show that the smaller church building was raised, on sloping ground to the north and east, but generally level ground to the west. This is much as we see it today. During the development of the Cathedral in 1885 and 1913, large areas of gravestones were removed from the north-east area of the churchyard to allow for landscaping and building the Vestries. Those areas that were not built on retain their burial markers in this part of the churchyard.



Painting, dated 1853: NE area of churchyard showing many burials, all of which was removed during building of Vestry buildings and Chancel in the 20th Century.

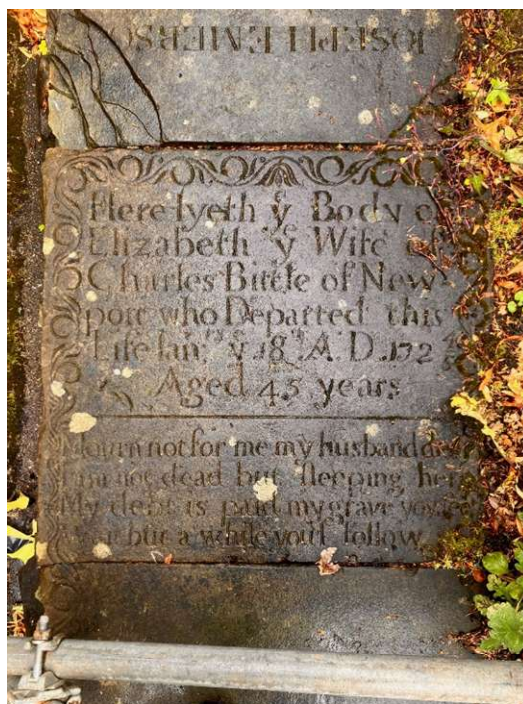
- 2.5 There are burial markers, such as tombs and headstones within the western churchyard. These are generally raised higher than the pathways, particularly as you move westward and bounded by retaining stone walls. These areas also contain mature trees; many of which were planted in the 20th Century. The original intention was that new trees would replace the older trees, but they were never felled. There is therefore a very large number of trees and dense foliage for the size of the churchyard.
- 2.6 The westernmost area of churchyard is flat grass, with no burial markers. This area is now used for cremated remains, although there are no memorial stones. It is likely that these were removed in the work at the end of the 19th Century and there are likely to be burials below ground.



Western part of the churchyard, looking east from the lychgate toward the Cathedral building.

- 2.7 The retaining walls in the churchyard were likely introduced during the major re-landscaping in 1885, when the entrance off Clifton Road was introduced. They are built of the same stone type (Old Devonian Red Sandstone) as the main Cathedral building. They have been pointed in cementitious mortar in the past.

- 2.8 There are modern building materials used throughout the Cathedral grounds, consistent with significant interventions in the 19th and 20th Centuries. One such example is the buried storage area, in the NW area of the churchyard (photo below). The roof is built of concrete with ferrous metal reinforcement bars, which are exposed to the interior.
- 2.9 Around the perimeter of the building, are sunken drainage channels at the base of the external walls, which are lined with concrete at their base. They contain short retaining walls, of Red Sandstone, approx. 400-500mm away from the external walls of the building and are topped with reclaimed ledger stones. The re-purposing of ledgers from elsewhere on the site may suggest that the channels were introduced in 1913, when the vast area of burials to the north-east of the Cathedral building were cleared to make way for the Vestry extension and when significant excavations would have taken place in relation to the new heating system inside the Cathedral.
- 2.10 Some of the ledger stones around the edge of the gully retain legible engravings. They are generally dated between c.1720s and 1850s. Most of the ledgers are plain, either laid on their reverse side or have lost legible engravings due to weathering.
- 2.11 The current Cathedral Architect has completed a survey of the ledgers at the perimeter of the drainage channels on the north side of the North Aisle and the Galilee Chapel. There are two worthy of special mention, on the north side of the North Aisle.
- One ledger commemorating two Worwell brothers who were mariners and 'sincere friends'. They were both 'drown'd' at sea in 1828 and 1830. The ledger stone retains its text clearly and tells an interesting local and family story.
 - A ledger to Elizebeth Bittle, dated 1724, which has some decorative markings around the outside. The same markings can be seen on plain ledger slabs around other areas of the gully, which may make them of the same date.



Left: Ledger stone to Elizabeth Bittle, described in relation to her husband, Charles Bittle.

Right: Ledger stone to the Worwell brothers.

Both ledgers can be found on the north side of the North Aisle and would be retained in their existing positions.

- 2.10 All pathways throughout the Cathedral grounds are Tarmac, including the main vehicular driveway from Clifton Road and the main west path from the lychgate to the Tower.



(right): Tarmac parking area on north side of North Aisle.

3.0 Impact of proposals on significance:

- 3.1 The proposal affects the edge of the sunken drainage channels in front of the north and east walls of the North Aisle and the north wall of the Galilee Chapel. This includes ledger slabs, which were moved, possibly during major works in 1913. The ledger stones are badly broken up and uneven underfoot. This is a result of insufficient support being provided by the stone retaining walls underneath.
- 3.2 The stone retaining walls that are required to support the ledgers are in bad condition and have partially collapsed in places. There is weak rubble, earth and loose infill behind the wall, that would date from the excavation/ major re-landscaping works c.1885-1913.
- 3.3 The late Victorian interventions in the churchyard are extensive and the disruption to the ground wherever they introduced new retaining walls is substantial. This has also been evidenced in other areas of the Cathedral grounds where there are brick retaining walls behind the facing sandstone. At the edge of the drainage channels, these short retaining walls consist of a single skin of red sandstone only.
- 3.4 The area of proposed works at the edge of the drainage channels is confined to areas that have already been substantially disturbed at the turn of the C19, particularly in front of the North Aisle, where the ledgers are at the perimeter of modern tarmac. These ledgers are to be lifted and re-bed on a new cast slab. The new concrete slab is deliberately no wider than the existing ledgers, to ensure that groundwork is kept to a minimum. There is therefore no archaeological implications of the proposed works, which have been carefully considered.
- 3.5 All existing historic material, i.e., the stone ledgers and red sandstone retaining walls, is to be retained and re-used in the consolidation and re-building of the drainage channel.
- 3.6 A detailed survey of the ledgers; their condition and setting out has been conducted and the information is submitted as part of this application. It is therefore proposed to reinstate all ledgers in their current position. Where existing ledgers have split into pieces, they are to be repaired by re-bedding them on a sound slab, as shown in the details. This will avoid loss of historic material.



Condition of ledger stone on north side of North Aisle.

- 3.7 In front of the Galilee Chapel, the sunken drainage channel is set back from the pedestrian areas by an area of grass that contains burial markers and the remains of a memorial. It is not considered necessary to install guarding around the edge of this channel, as the impact of fall protection in front of the Galilee Chapel and potential below ground archaeology, cannot be justified. As the ledgers and retaining walls are in poor condition, in-situ conservation and repair is proposed in this area, with all works above ground, such as re-pointing in hydraulic lime mortars, as specified.



Grass area in front of the Galilee Chapel, which is to be retained as existing, i.e., with no guarding to the drainage channel and ledgers retained in-situ.

- 3.8 No works are proposed within the drainage channels themselves; the existing concrete lining will be retained.
- 3.9 The new railings and vehicular kerb on the north side of the North Aisle will constitute a visual change to the appearance of the building from the north side.



North side of the North Aisle, looking westward toward the Tower.

- 3.10 The new railings will provide a physical barrier between pedestrians and cars, and the drainage channels, which is a health and safety requirement adjacent to the car park. The safety of Cathedral visitors is crucial to the ongoing use and commercial resilience of the building.
- 3.11 The design of the vehicular kerb and railings has been considered to limit the impact. The railings are not fixed into any historic building fabric. The new concrete slab will be concealed beneath and no wider than the ledger slabs, meaning that no visual repairs will be made to the tarmac and the ledgers will appear as existing once works are complete.
- 3.12 The small upstand to the concrete slab is to be finished with limestone copings, which is in-keeping with the Doulling and Bath limestone dressings of the original building.
- 3.13 The new metal railings at the perimeter, would have a very slender profile. They are designed as a guard rail rather than handrail and can therefore be minimal in their number and height, whilst complying with modern Building Regulations. They are to be finished in a dark colour, which will further limit their visual impact against the sandstone walls of the building.
- 3.14 The new guarding has been carefully considered to be practical, compliant with modern regulations, whilst in-keeping and aesthetically pleasing with the historic details of the Cathedral building.
- 3.15 The Cathedral Architect will oversee the works on site, including the final setting out and conservation work to the ledger slabs.

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