

St Mary & All Saints, Droxford – Statement of Significance

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St Mary & All Saints, Droxford - Statement of Significance



Section 1: Brief history and description of the church building, contents, churchyard and setting

Church Building

A church may have been established at Droxford by St Wilfrid during his mission to the Meon Valley in the period 681 to 686, but no evidence has yet been found of a building of this period. The first historical reference to Droxford was in the year 826, when the manor was granted by King Egbert to the Prior and Monks of the Old Monastery at Winchester. In 1086 the Domesday Book described 'Drocheneford' as being held by the Bishop of Winchester for the benefit of his monks, and having at that time a church valued at 20s.

The present church could have started as a simple two-cell Norman building with just a nave and chancel, and possibly an apse. The chancel arch, with zigzag carvings, may date from about 1150 to 1160, and stands in its original position, but has been raised by several feet in more recent times. The north and south doorways are also from the 12th century, and are elaborately decorated with tooth-moulding, zigzags, and cable moulding.



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The north aisle and north chapel were first built around the end of the 12th century, and the south aisle and south chapel early in the 13th century. Pointed arches were cut into the side walls of the original building to connect with the aisles and chapels, and the Norman doorways were moved to the outer walls of the aisles.



The chapels appear to have been enlarged at the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the 14th century. It is known that both were dedicated to St Mary, since the will of Roger Bryklesworth, dated 26th April 1390, bequeathed 20 quarters of barley ‘to the fabric of the two chancels of Our Lady adjoining the principal chancel on either side’.

Late in the 15th or early in the 16th centuries the side aisles were widened to their current size, and the north and south doorways were moved to their present positions. The outline of the earlier aisles can still be seen in the stonework of the end walls.



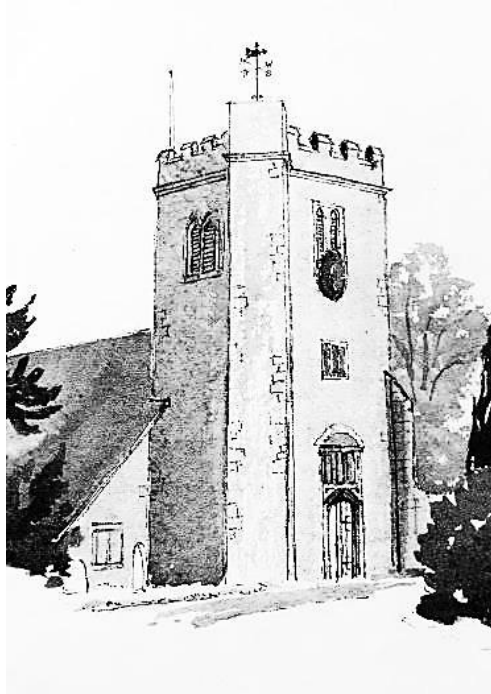
Above the west door of the tower is a plaque showing the date AD1599.



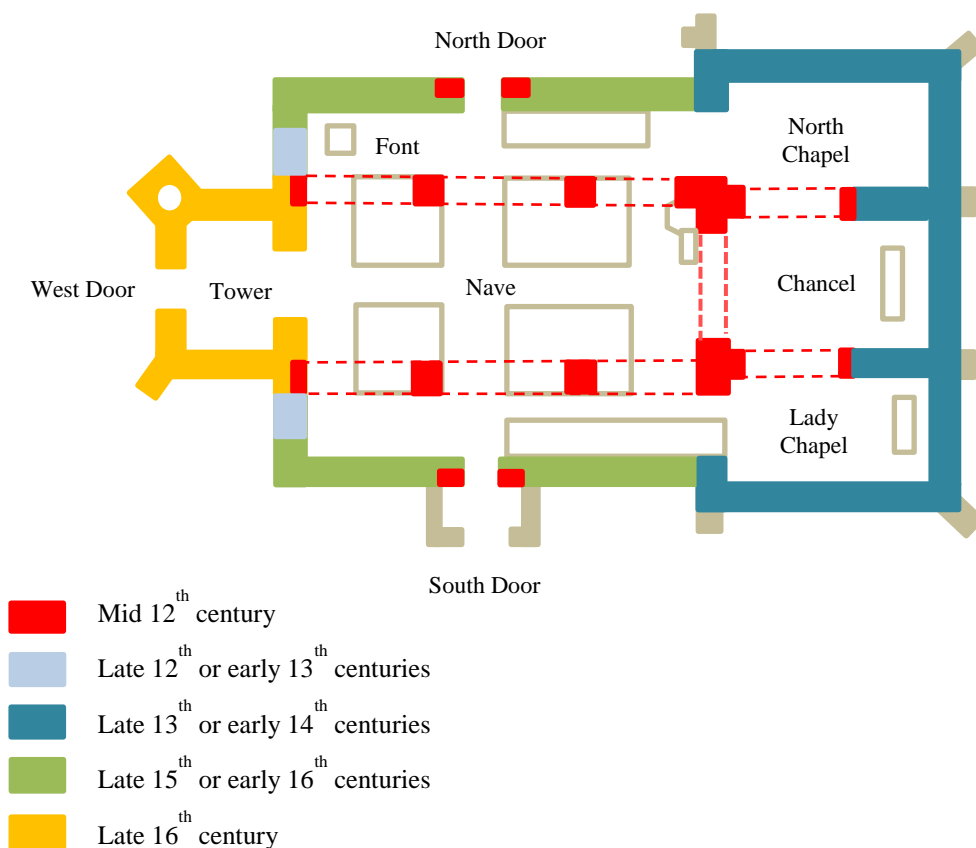
This date is thought to refer to the construction of the main parts of the present tower, but an inventory of church goods made on 15th July 1552 included ‘Foure belles in the Steple’, indicating that an earlier structure had existed here. It is possible that this steeple was extended or replaced in 1599 to provide the space required for full circle ringing mechanisms. The first of the present bells, a treble, was fitted in 1606. The second is from 1631, and was re-cast in 1899. The third and tenor date from 1672. A fifth bell, from St Margaret’s Church, Canterbury and dated 1625, was added in 1969.

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The tower has a square stair turret set diagonally in the north-west corner. The brick battlements were added later, and the *Victoria County History* of 1908 described some of the stonework around the west door as 'modern'. The tower is fitted with a gilded clock from 1861, and surmounted by a gilded weather-vane.



The plan below (not to scale) shows possible dates for the main fabric of the building.



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The main walls of the church are of flint rubble, faced with limestone on the interior, and flint on the exterior. Much of the exterior flintwork appears to be of fairly recent date. Some of the buttresses, including those on the south porch, have a simple decorative pattern.



A number of put-log holes, used for the erection of wooden scaffolding during construction of the building, can be seen on the walls of the Lady Chapel and the tower.

The interior walls are plastered and whitewashed, except for the exposed stonework around most of the windows and arches. The window surrounds in the Lady Chapel are painted white.

The windows in the north chapel and Lady Chapel have stone tracery in the Decorated style, dating from the late 13th and early 14th centuries. All have cusped Y-tracery, except for the east window of the Lady Chapel, which has cusped-intersecting tracery.



The chancel window and those in the side aisles are in the Perpendicular style, dating from the late 15th or early 16th centuries.

There are two clerestory windows high up on either side of the chancel, and two 19th century dormer windows on the south side of the nave.

The roofs are tiled, except for those of the side chapels. The main roof slopes down steeply over both the nave and the side aisles, whilst the chancel roof has projecting eaves and a cornice, typical of the Georgian period.

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Most of the ceilings are plastered, except for the chancel, which is panelled, and the Lady Chapel, which is raftered. The side walls of the nave have a distinctive cornice.

The floors of the nave, the aisles and the side chapels consist of quarry tiles, slabs and memorial tablets, forming a mixed but historically interesting surface. The chancel floor is largely made up of a mixture of plain and patterned Victorian tiles.

Contents

The church retains a significant number of medieval features.

Stone segments of the original windows of the church can be seen above the arch in the south wall of the chancel.



A narrow staircase in the north pillar of the chancel arch once led to a rood loft. The exit from the staircase can now be seen above the pulpit.



The north chapel has a piscina and an aumbry. Another piscina and aumbry are to be found behind the sanctuary panelling in the chancel, and there is a third piscina in the Lady Chapel.



The Lady Chapel houses the Purbeck marble figure of a woman, thought to be part of an altar tomb installed early in the 14th century by John de Drokenesford in memory of his mother.



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John de Drokenesford, the son of a local squire, was at times Rector of Droxford, Keeper of the King's Wardrobe to Edward I, Chancellor of the Exchequer to Edward II, a chaplain to the Pope, and Bishop of Bath & Wells. The marble figure may have been removed at the time of the Puritans, but was recovered from a nearby field early in the 19th century.

The arch between the Lady Chapel and the chancel rests on two carved heads, characteristic in style of the 14th century.



To the left of the altar in the Lady Chapel is a medieval stone niche with an ogee canopy and panelled base. This is thought to date from the late 14th century, and would once have contained a statue, probably of the Virgin Mary. Within the canopy is a pattern of carved roses and miniature vaulting, and there are traces of medieval paint.



The south and east walls of the north chapel display the remnants of an extensive area of wall painting, with floral sprays set in a masonry pattern. The stonework of the south arcade has the faded remains of a pattern of intertwined red roses.



There are four mass dials on the exterior of the church, two on the jambs of the south doorway, and two on the stonework of the south east window of the Lady Chapel.



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Graffiti appear in a number of parts of the church, on both stonework and woodwork. Some have names or initials, and a few are dated, the earliest identified so far being 1765. There are various ritual protection marks, including one daisy-wheel or hexfoil design.



The church contains many memorials, the earliest of which may be a black marble floor slab in the north chapel that is dedicated to Edward Searle, a local farmer who died in 1617. An unmarked slab next to it could be of a similar date.

Dr Nicholas Preston is buried under a light brown marble slab in the south aisle of the church. He was rector from 1642 until 1650, when he was ejected by the Puritans, and replaced by an Independent minister, Mr Robert Webb. Dr Preston took back the position in 1660 after the restoration under Charles II.

A number of members of the Morley family, who lived at the Manor House, are commemorated by impressive 17th and 18th century wall memorials near the font. A large marble cartouche with carved scrolls is dedicated to Francis Morley, who died in 1690. It was probably made in the workshops of Edward Pierce, a noted mason and sculptor of the time.



Lewis Stephens, rector from 1722 to 1746, founded the Parish Library, which is now held in the library of the University of Southampton. His unidentified grave is in the churchyard, but there is a circular memorial to him on the south wall of the Lady Chapel.



Among the memorials on the wall of the south aisle is a white marble monument commemorating Richard Goodlad of Hill Place, and his second wife Frances.

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Mr Goodlad appears to have been a rather authoritarian magistrate, described by William Cobbett of Botley as ‘a cock Justice of the Peace’. He was Deputy Lieutenant in 1803, and Sheriff of Hampshire in 1818.

Galleries were erected at both ends of the nave during the 18th century. In the middle of the 19th century the galleries were removed, and the Georgian oak pews were replaced with rows of Victorian pine pews throughout the church, including the Lady Chapel.

The brass eagle lectern was donated by Mr Richard Redfern Goodlad of Hill Place, in memory of his wife Emma, who died in 1867.



The pulpit, a Victorian copy of a 15th century design, was given to St Mary & All Saints in 1882 by the congregation of St Matthew's, Denmark Hill, where Stephen Bridge, rector of Droxford from 1868 to 1886, had previously been the vicar.



An early photograph shows the nave and chancel as they would have been during the latter part of the 19th century. There are religious inscriptions on the stonework, and the pulpit is located under the chancel arch rather than in its present position to the north side. The rood loft access is hidden by plaster, and there are several more rows of pews than there are now.

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In 1903 Canon John Vaughan carried out a major restoration and re-ordering of the church. Many of the medieval features that had previously been hidden were revealed once more. The 17th century altar rails that had been removed during the Victorian period were restored, and the sanctuary itself was panelled in fine dark wood.



The font is from the early 20th century, but copied from a 12th century design. Its wooden lid is decorated with an ornate wrought iron cross, inscribed with the date 1980.

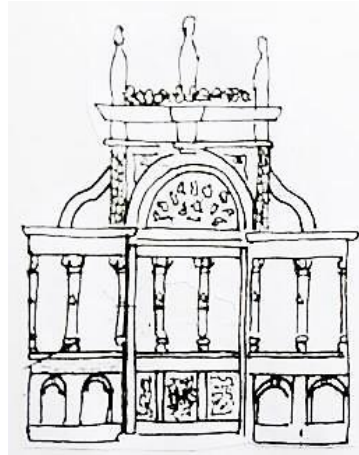


Those from Droxford who died in the 1914-1918 war are commemorated on a rectangular alabaster tablet on a blue mosaic background, surmounted by a red mosaic pediment, manufactured by James Powell & Sons, and mounted to the left of the north door.



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The neo-Jacobean oak screen is by the eminent architect Sir Charles Nicholson, and dates from 1935, when he was working on designs for Portsmouth Cathedral.



Dr Neville Lovett, the first Bishop of Portsmouth from 1927 to 1936, and subsequently Bishop of Salisbury, retired to Droxford in 1946. He is commemorated by a simple memorial in the Lady Chapel, which was restored in his memory in 1952.



The reredos in the Lady Chapel was given by her family in memory of Hannah Talbot-Ponsonby, and is dated 6th January 1952. It shows the *Agnus Dei* in the centre, lilies on the right, and the Sacred Monogram IHC on the left.



The church is well endowed with stained glass from many of the leading designers and manufacturers of the 20th century. The two south windows of the Lady Chapel were installed in 1903. They are by Clayton & Bell, and attributed to George Daniels. The left hand window depicts the risen Christ with St Peter. The right hand window shows the risen Christ with Mary Magdalene.



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The single-mullion window in the west wall of the south aisle, depicting the Virgin Mary on the left and Simeon on the right, was made in 1909 in the studios founded by Charles Eamer Kempe, and was probably cartooned by J.W. Lisle. It has the company signature, a wheat sheaf, in the bottom right hand corner of the left hand light, superimposed with the black tower of Walter Tower, heir to Charles Eamer Kempe.



In the west wall of the north aisle is another single-mullion window, dating from 1920. It shows St Nicholas on the left and St Christopher on the right, and was manufactured by James Powell & Sons, also known as Whitefriars Glass.



The east window of the Lady Chapel, installed in 1938, is a memorial to the Reverend Stephen Bridge and his wife, Margaret. The Virgin and Child are depicted at its centre,



The side lights show St Francis preaching to a number of birds, St Wilfrid with the builders of St Mary & All Saints, St George slaying a dragon, and St Stephen speaking in his own defence.



The window was designed by Martin Travers, who at the time was chief instructor in stained glass at the Royal College of Art.

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The stained glass in the east window of the chancel was designed by Christopher Webb, one of the leading exponents in this medium during the first half of the 20th century. Its main theme is the Nativity.

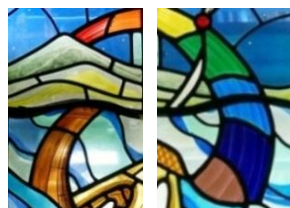


It was installed in 1947 as a memorial to members of the Hulbert family, after the previous window was damaged during the Second World War.

The window adjacent to the font in the north-west corner depicts the Creation. It was designed in 1982 by Carl Edwards, who also produced stained glass for Liverpool Cathedral, the House of Lords, and the Temple Church in London.



In the south-east corner is a two-light window by Vanessa Cutler. It commemorates the year 2000 millennium, and shows Noah's Ark in the flood.



Electric lighting was first introduced in 1932. The nave and side aisles are now lit by gilded wrought iron coronas, and there is a variety of light fittings elsewhere.

Heating is currently provided by a boiler located underground outside the north wall of the church and a number of radiators dispersed through the building.

The church has recently benefitted from the acquisition of a good quality electronic organ, which replaced a Victorian pipe organ that was first installed in 1873. A number of other electronic audio systems have also been fitted.

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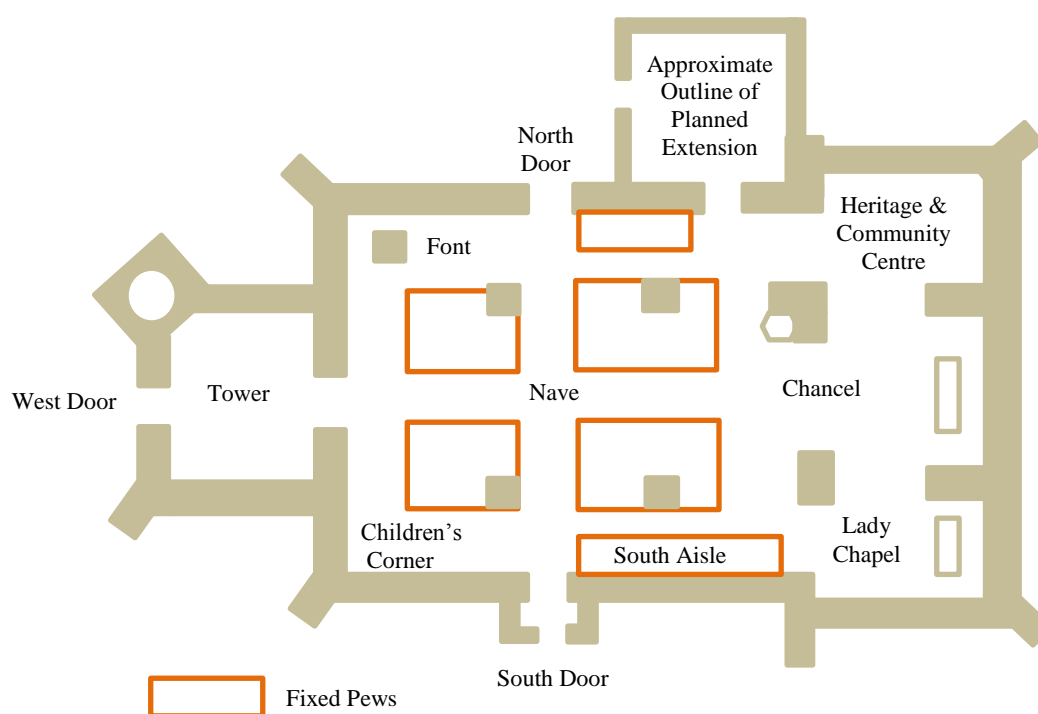
Other recent acquisitions include upholstered oak chairs for use in the Lady Chapel and chancel, funded by a grant from the Diocesan Mission Opportunities Fund and donations from members of the congregation.

The children's corner has been improved with furniture made by a local craftsman, also funded by the Mission Opportunities Fund and local donations.

Significant restoration work was carried out on the fabric of the tower, the south roof, the north chapel and the Lady Chapel in 2016, supported by a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The north chapel has recently been glazed, and is being converted into a heritage and community centre.

A faculty was granted late in 2017 to build an extension on the north side of the church to house essential toilet and kitchen facilities, with space for meetings and administration. This will be the first significant addition to the fabric of the church since the present tower was constructed in 1599. The approximate outline of the planned extension is shown below.



Churchyard

The main approach to the churchyard is through a pair of gates mounted on brick piers in the village square. Together with an inscribed Welsh grey slate tablet on the adjacent Manor House wall, they form a memorial to those from the village who died in the 1939-1945 war.

The churchyard extends from the village square to the water meadows of the River Meon. It is a habitat for lichen, and contains a diverse collection of trees. Bird species frequenting the nearby fields and meadows include owls, herons, kingfishers and buzzards.

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There is at least one underground vault, and a number of memorials of significant local interest. Close to the east wall of the church is a monument dedicated to Anne Sumner, who died in 1833. She was the first wife of J.A. Griffith Colpoys, who was rector of Droxford from 1831.



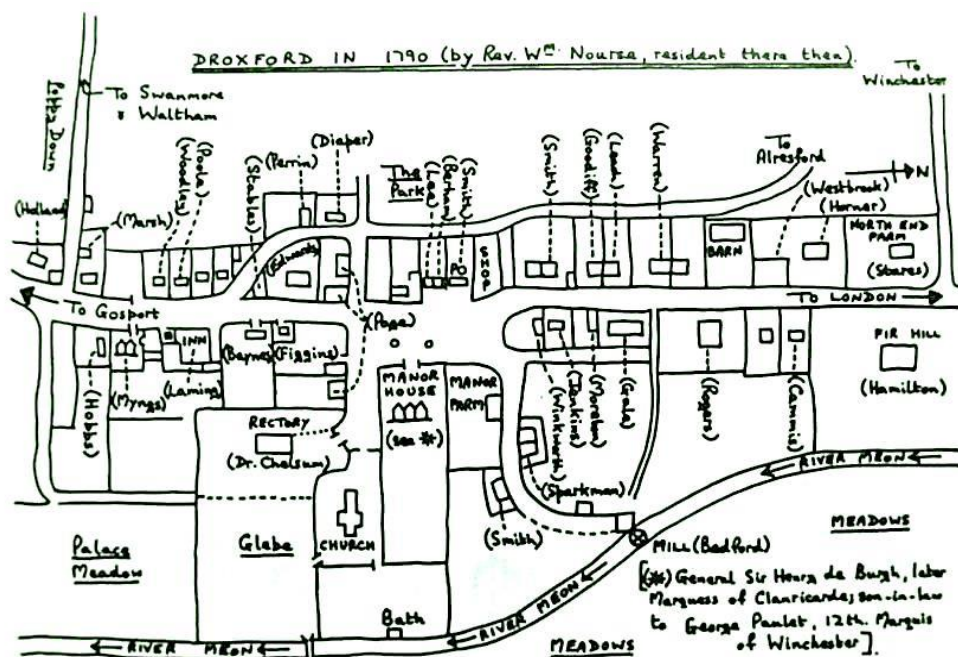
Her father was John Bird Sumner, who at the time was Bishop of Chester, and in 1848 was to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Her uncle was Charles Sumner, Bishop of Winchester from 1827 to 1869.

Setting

Droxford is strategically situated near to an ancient ford across the River Meon. A few miles away are Old Winchester Hill and Beacon Hill, both of which have National Nature Reserve and SSSI status, and are linked by the South Downs Way. Old Winchester Hill is crowned with an Iron Age hill fort, and has a number of Bronze Age barrows. No significant Roman remains have been found in Droxford itself, but excavations have revealed the presence of important Roman buildings nearby.

An Anglo-Saxon cemetery was discovered close to Droxford Station when the railway was being constructed in 1900. It contained up to three hundred graves from the years 450 to 600.

The church and churchyard are near the centre of the village close to the square and Manor House, as shown in this map originally drawn by the Reverend W^m. Nourse in 1790.



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It shows the Rectory with its glebe running down to the River Meon, where the celebrated angler Isaak Walton may have fished after his daughter Anne married William Hawkins, who was rector from 1664 to 1691. A number of the houses shown on this map still survive and give a distinctive Georgian appearance to the centre of the village, much of which is a conservation area.

In the early 19th century William Garnier, rector from 1801 to 1831, laid out the Rectory garden. Together with the rector of Meonstoke, a relative of his who was a great lover of trees and an expert in their cultivation, he also planted the Beech Walk in order that they might walk under pleasant shade to each other's houses. The Beech Walk is now a well-used public footpath.

The Meon Valley Trail links Droxford with the other churches in the valley, some of which may originally have been founded by St Wilfrid. Part of its route is on the disused Meon Valley railway line, which is a popular trail for walkers, riders and cyclists.

Public footpaths run close to the church through the meadows on both sides of the River Meon, and up on to the chalk downs on either side of the valley. Some of these form part of the Wayfarer's Walk, a long distance trail between Emsworth on the Hampshire coast and Inkpen Beacon in Berkshire. The parish of Droxford is now part of the South Downs National Park.

Section 2: The significance of the church (including its contents and churchyard) in terms of:

(i) Its special architectural and historical interest

Much of the architectural and historic interest of the fabric of St Mary & All Saints is to be found in the interior of the church, which escaped major restoration in later centuries, and manages to portray with some clarity, largely unimpeded by more recent additions, the evolution of the building from the Norman period until just before the Reformation:

- the chancel arch, with its zigzag carving, and the substantial walls of the nave and chancel, predominantly date from the middle of the 12th century;
- stone segments from two of the original round-headed windows of the church can be seen in the south wall of the chancel;
- the pointed arches of the north and south arcades date from the latter part of the 12th century and the first half of the 13th century, when the aisles and side chapels were first constructed;
- the side chapels were enlarged to their current size late in the 13th or early in the 14th centuries and retain their contemporary window traceries;
- the aisles were extended to their present width late in the 15th century or early in the 16th century, and have window traceries from these times;
- the tracery of the east window in the chancel is of the same period.

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The exterior of the church presents a more complicated picture. Apart from the Norman doorways, very little of the original 12th century fabric is visible from the outside, hidden behind the aisles and side chapels that were added during later periods. A single steep roof covers both the Norman nave and the Tudor side aisles, and whilst the appearance of the tower is characteristic of the Tudor period, it may incorporate parts of an earlier steeple. The chancel, originally built in Norman times and probably extended late in the 13th or early in the 14th century, has a Georgian-style roof with a distinctive cornice. Much of the external flintwork appears to be from fairly recent times, covering earlier walls from a variety of periods.

In these very different ways the interior and exterior of St Mary & All Saints each display the features of a village church that has evolved to meet the needs of its local community over a number of centuries. Overall the main fabric of the church, which is a Grade 1 listed building, is considered to be of moderate architectural and historic significance (using the terminology suggested in the ChurchCare guidance for Statements of Significance).

The churchyard is an integral part of the landscape of the village of Droxford, situated between the village square and the river, and contains many memorials that form an important part of the local heritage. It is a crossroads for a number of popular footpaths and trails in an attractive part of the Meon Valley, and is now part of the South Downs National Park. The churchyard is also considered to be of moderate significance.

(ii) Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest

The contents of the church include a number of features of archaeological and historic interest from the pre-Reformation period, which are outlined in Section 1. These include:

- aumbries in the north chapel and chancel;
- piscinae in both side chapels and the chancel;
- an early 14th century Purbeck marble effigy in the Lady Chapel;
- a 14th century canopied niche in the Lady Chapel;
- two 14th century carved heads on the arch between the Lady Chapel and the chancel;
- a narrow staircase inside the north pillar of the chancel arch, which would have given access to a rood loft.

Some of the remnants of wall paintings may also be from these times, and there are four medieval mass dials on the exterior of the church.

Taken together these features give some idea as to how St Mary & All Saints may have looked and functioned in the pre-Reformation period, and are collectively considered to be of moderate significance. The early 14th century marble effigy is described in *Pevsner & Lloyd* as ‘a fine piece of formalized sculpture’, and is of moderate significance in its own right.

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Other features that are considered to be of moderate significance include:

- the extensive collection of memorials inside the church, and in particular the marble cartouche near the font dedicated to Francis Morley;
- the memorial in the churchyard commemorating Anne Sumner;
- the 17th century altar rails, described in *Pevsner & Lloyd* as ‘A fine piece of C 17 craftsmanship’;
- the collection of 19th century furnishings, including the pews, the lectern, and the pulpit;
- the neo-Jacobean oak screen designed by Sir Charles Nicholson.

The collection of 20th century stained glass is also considered to be of moderate significance, and some of the individual windows may justify this level of importance in their own right.

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

The capacity of the pews still fitted in the church now greatly exceeds what is required for regular church services. At the same time the space that they occupy places significant restrictions on the use of the church for other religious and community activities.

It is proposed to remove three rows of pews on either side at the rear of the nave in order to provide more space around the font and in the children’s corner. The resulting space will also offer a more satisfactory location for the electronic organ and the choir, and allow other group activities to take place, including performances by small groups of musicians.

It is also proposed to remove the remaining pews from the north aisle to allow this space to be used as a setting for professionally designed and manufactured portable heritage displays.

Removal of the pews from the rear of the nave and from the north aisle will also improve disabled access inside the church.

Taken together with the number of pews that have already been removed over the years, it is accepted that implementation of these proposals will be a further step away from the extensive ordering of the pews throughout the church when they were first installed to accommodate very large congregations in the middle of the 19th century. Although these proposals to remove further pews might be considered to have a moderate impact on the 19th century heritage of the church, congregations of this size are no longer expected on a regular basis, and sufficient pews will be retained, together with a number of other 19th century furnishings, to maintain a strong link to this period in the history of St Mary & All Saints.

It is also considered that this impact will be more than offset by the ability to use the church for a wider range of religious and community activities, and the restoration of some parts of

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the building to an appearance more in character with its configuration before pews were first installed, providing a broader perspective of the character and history of the church.

For special occasions, such as weddings and funerals, the present maximum seating capacity of about 250 will be maintained by the use of portable chairs, many of which will be located in the new spaces made available by the removal of pews.

Our proposals for the re-ordering of pews will not alter or obscure any of the principal features of artistic or archaeological interest in St Mary & All Saints that are outlined in Sections 1 & 2 of this Statement of Significance, nor will they affect the main fabric of the building in any way.

The likely re-location of two brass wall memorials on wooden mountings in the north aisle to allow heritage displays to be located in this area will not detract in any way from the historic significance of these memorials, which date from 1897 and 1915. The impact of this change is therefore considered to be low.

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