

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Section 1: The church in its urban/rural environment

1.1 Setting of the Church

St Hilary Church is set in a rural location of a small Cornish Churchtown of approximately a dozen dwellings, including previous vicarage, Doomsday listed farm.

The Church is a Grade 1 listed building inside and out:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1310334?section=official-list-entry>

The Church House, South of the Church of St Hilary is Grade II listed:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1310170?section=official-list-entry>

There are many gravestones and crosses also listed as can be seen on the Cornwall Mapping website. Select the layer for listings - (yellow is Grade I and red is Grade II)

<https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=9&xcoord=155076&ycoord=31318&wsName=ccmap&layerName=Grade%20I:Grade%20II>

The path leading to the church has two listed Scheduled Ancient Monuments:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1018206?section=official-list-entry>

There is evidence of this site being a fortified site in pre-historic times and later a roman fort-let.

There is a C4th Roman marker stone referencing Constantine 306-308 BC and other important stones by the pathway leading to the church include a C6th standing stone incised 'Noti Noti', a C13th priest's coffin lid with incised cross and two Celtic Crosses.

St Hilary Church was originally the responsibility of the Monks of St Michael's Mount. In 1095 the Monastery on the Mount was founded by the community of Mont St Michel, in Normandy. Robert de Mortain, William the Conqueror's brother, then gave the adjacent land to the Monks of the Mount and this land became the parish of St Hilary. This may explain the dedication of the church to St Hilary of Poitiers, unusual for a church in West Cornwall to be dedicated to a French saint. The C14th spire is also of an unusual French design. The church is situated on the highest point between the bays of St Ives and Mounts Bay and was over the centuries used as a shipping mark for both ports and was regularly whitewashed to enhance its visibility.

1.2. The Living Churchyard

The churchyard is a closed churchyard administered by Cornwall Council. There is a mature tree circuit around the churchyard reflecting the original Llan and with a significant drop on the north side which has extensive views across the countryside and is a haven for wildlife. Within the church yard are a number of significant graves including some Grade II listed.

1.3 Social History

Until the C19th St Hilary was the parish church for Marazion therefore many prominent figures of the town are buried in the churchyard.

In 1775 a significant scientist, Malachy Hitchens', became the Vicar of St Hilary. He was a scientist, mathematician and astronomer and for a time was Assistant to the Astronomer Royal, Nevil Maskelyne compiling the Nautical Almanac. This he continued to do from St Hilary employing local people, including the St Hilary Schoolmaster, to collect and compute the data – thus becoming one of the first computers! In 1801 the first national census was commissioned and the detail of the St Hilary census is unusually detailed listing names of householders and numbers in the household.

<https://archaeoastronomycornwall.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/1.hitchens-proof.pdf>

The best known Vicar of St Hilary is Father Bernard Nico Walke, Vicar from 1913 to 1936. Fr Walke was the grandson of Fr William John Coope, Rector of King Charles The Martyr in Falmouth who was influenced by the Oxford Movement and established Anglo Catholicism in his parish.

St Hilary Church was already known as a high church but Fr Walke took this to new heights. His wife, Annie, was an artist and friends both with the later Newlyn School artists and some of the Bloomsbury Group including Roger Fry. Fr Walke undertook to a programme of decoration and worked with the Newlyn artists to paint the church including the panels that depict many of the early

Cornish Saints illustrating their legends and stories. He also oversaw the introduction of a painted baldacchino over the high altar, stone altars, candles, bells and celebratory processions. The church was described by a recent Bishop of Truro as the nearest the Diocese has to an art gallery.

Fr Walke wrote religious plays for his parishioners to act and these came to the notice of Filson Young, an early producer at the British Broadcasting Company (later the BBC). Filson Young saw their potential and in December 1926 organised for the Bethlehem Play to be broadcast nationally – the first BBC outside broadcast. It was a complex operation as St Hilary Church had no electricity and the recordings were made in the vicarage and were sent by various means to Plymouth which had the nearest transmitter. The play became a national Christmas radio event and was broadcast every year over the next decade and one year featured a picture of the Church on the front of the Radio Times - so St Hilary Church was put on the national map. The national profile of the church brought the high church practices to the attention of various protestant groups and some parishioners which led to proceedings in the Consistory Courts. Finally in August 1932 the Protestant Truth Society organised for a group of their supporters to come down from Plymouth to St Hilary, where they entered the church armed with crowbars etc and broke up many of the artefacts including the baldacchino, stone altars etc. This raid made headlines in the national press.

Fr Walke was also very active on the care of his parishioners and had a high profile in the community. After the WW1 he and colleagues were aware of the extreme poverty suffered by the people of West Cornwall. Working with Bishop Frere, Quaker and Methodist groups he set up a fellowship to address this poverty with the idea of opening a disused mine to provide employment.

After the raid in 1932 Fr Walke's health declined and he was admitted to Tehidy Sanatorium suffering from TB. There he wrote his book entitled 'Twenty Years at St Hilary' which has become a classic, three editions, and rarely out of print. Not buried at St Hilary but at Lelant graveyard. Always a figure of much interest there is a constant stream of academics, researchers and clergy contacting the Church to further their studies.

St Hilary was a rural, farming, mining parish and the population grew dramatically with the rapid development of the mining industry in the late C17th and C18th. However most of the mines then dramatically collapsed in the mid C19th with half of the population going overseas to work in the hard-rock mines that were opening up across the world. This Cornish Diaspora meant the population of the parish dropped by half from around 2,000 to just under 900 persons (much the same as it is today). Many of the descendants of these miners are researching their family history and contact our small Heritage Centre. Visitors or email contacts are received from all over the world, South Africa, Australia, USA, Canada etc. Part of the parish is within the Mining World Heritage Site.

In recent years numbers attending or involved with the church have significantly increased and from a wider geographical area in West Cornwall, including Lamorna, Penzance, Newlyn etc. This shows there is a demand/need to worship in the modern liberal Catholic tradition reflecting a broad section of society.

1.4. The Church Building in General

The current church is probably the third or possibly the fourth church building on the site. On Good Friday in 1853 the Church had a dramatic fire, leaving only the spire, north door and porch intact. Rebuilt in 1855 and consecrated in 1856. Designed by William White, pupil of Gilbert Scott, It has unusually fine delicate granite pillars, window lights in the central transept sending light into interior give the church a light airy feeling. Two side aisles (north and south) C14th French spire decorated with sculptured heads reputedly being those of the C14th Abbots of St Michael's Mount. Under the guidance of Father Bernard Walke and Ernest Procter ARA an overall scheme of decoration of the church was completed including work by well-known artists including, Annie Walke, Roger Fry and other members of the Newlyn School.

In the 1990s a major programme of restoration was undertaken and a new stone altar was given and consecrated by Bishop Graham Leonard, the then Bishop of Truro?

The church is heated by strip electric ceiling heaters situated above the pews in the main body of the church. Side aisles remain cold and unheated. Spotlights are the main source of light –but in need of

updating as the church is dark on entry and the box of light switches is situated at the back of the church by the belfry and hard for visitors to find.

1.5. The Church building in detail

French C14th medieval spire with carved faces of Abbots on external surfaces plus gargoyle water spouts. Bell tower C14th. Cockerel weather vane. Original north door external door frame has two carvings, monkey's head and a bearded man. Original Sundial by Henry Bone dated 1777 on porch. North Aisle; Granite Reredos containing Visitation painting and flanked by gold leaf Arts & Crafts doors. South Aisle: Granite Reredos of City of God containing Flemish Christ. West Chapel of All Souls: Granite Reredos containing memorial on metal – Altar flanked by memorial boards. C19 organ – pipes set against vestry. Detail of art painted onto the church fabric and other items listed below.

1.6. Contents of the Church

During the incumbency of the Reverend Bernard Walke (1913-1936) the church was decorated by the second wave of Newlyn Artists. Bernard Walke and Ernest Procter ARA conceived the overall colour scheme and design for the church. Bernard Walke's wife, Annie was an artist and was close friends with the Newlyn School artists, Dod and Ernest Proctor, Dame Laura RA and Harold Knight, Harold & Gertude Harvey, Norman and Alethea Garstin, Gladys Hynes and the child prodigy Joan Manning Sanders. The panels in the chancel were decorated by these artist and depict the stories associated with the early Celtic Saints. Roger Fry painted his St Francis as a gift to the church: Annie Walke painted St Joan & The Madonna with the Red Shoes. Among the works by Ernest Procter is the dramatic Christus Mundi suspended over the Chancel steps, the pulpit saints, Collier memorial, the Visitation, the processional cross and the delicate cross above the high altar. A small Norman Font (damaged in the 1932 raid) and now by the South door used as a Holy Water Stoup. The origin of Artist and origin of *The Stations of the Cross* is unknown, but probably date from the mid C19th.

The church has six bells but these are currently with Taylors of Loughborough awaiting renovation and then to be reinstalled in the belfry.

The floor of the Church is tiled and slightly raised from the original floor, this was done after the 1854 fire. Some graves (Malachy Hitchin's family and some of the St Aubyn family) are still underneath but the memorial stones may remain there.

The church has a significant collection of church plate and vestments listed in the inventory. Some dating from the C17th. One cope given to Father Bernard Walke by the early BBC producer Filson Young is on loan to the Penlee House Museum in Penzance. The links with the artists include some of national and international importance: Dame Laura Knight, Roger Fry, Dod Proctor, Harold Harvey among them. Compton McKenzie, Bernard Shaw, John Betjeman, A N Wilson, Petroc Trelawney and Patrick Gale all had or have connections with Church.

Father Bernard Walke was a high Anglican of the Catholic Tradition and since his arrival in 1913 had initiated a programme of decoration in the church including artwork, the introduction of stone altars, candles and shrines. This was not acceptable to some members of the congregation and after a long period of unrest the Church Authorities ruled that certain items be removed; which ruling Father Walke ignored. Things came to a head in August 1932 when a group of around 40 people from the Protestant Truth Society travelled to St Hilary, entered and damaged the offending items, including Ernest Procter's Baldacchino over the altar, smashed stone altars and tried to erase inscriptions on monuments. However, it is recorded that Father Walke was allowed to remove The Blessed Sacrament to the Vicarage, some parishioners formed a line and knelt as he took it to safety. (For more information see Social History 1.3)

In 2010 the Grade 2 listed Old Church House was restored – with a meeting room and kitchen upstairs and a small Heritage Centre and facilities downstairs.

This supports the activities of the church, welcoming academic researchers, family history searches, local historical information etc. The Heritage Centre is open on Wednesday afternoons in the summer and other times by appointment.

Additionally pre-booked guided tours of the Church are offered to cover its history, its unique art collection and the local area including its mining past. These tours are a fundraising event and often include refreshments. Interested groups are from not only the local area but national and internationally. As one of the Bishops of Truro put it – ‘*St Hilary is the nearest the Diocese has to an Art Gallery*’.

1.7 Significance for Mission

Since 2017 Fr Jeff Risbridger has restored the catholicity of the worship within a modern, liberal and inclusive tradition. As a result, the congregation has grown from an average Sunday gathering of seventeen pre-Covid to currently over fifty. A greater number of lay people now actively participate in the service as altar servers, readers of lessons, leading intercessions, offertory etc. The average Wednesday mid-week Eucharist has grown from four or five pre-Covid to currently between sixteen and twenty. Both services attract regular local congregations as well as visitors.

Although the local school is not a Church School, they regularly use the church for their own Carol Concerts, Harvest Festivals and End of Year celebrations. Since 2021 the Church has established a Young Explorers Group for children in KS1 & 2 (Primary aged), who meet in the church fortnightly on a Wednesday after school to explore God’s Word, linking it to the reading for the Sunday ahead through worship, arts and crafts. Their activities are regularly re-printed in the priest’s weekly newsletter.

In addition, alongside members of the local Methodist Chapel, St Hilary church members have been going into the school to weekly to deliver the assembly following the *Open the Book* programme.

Post Covid, the church has become the venue for a wide range of concerts. The world renowned International Musicians Seminar situated at Prussia Cove, which was founded in 1972 by Sándor Végh and has as its Artistic Director Steven Isserlis, has chosen St Hilary church, with its excellent acoustics, to be one of its regular venues. More recently concerts have included Duo Lamornia (classical), Will Keating (folk), Acoustek (folk/rock), A Cappella (accompanied choir), Local Cornish Male Voice Choirs). In the autumn 2024, Rhys Wynn Jones, ex homeless man undertook a series of concerts at venues including Truro Cathedral, St Mary’s, Penzance and St Hilary fundraising for homeless charities Crisis at Christmas 2024 and the Night Church at Penzance. Our small parish church raised over £2,000 following a performance by Rhys for these charities.

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

Glebe Land/Parking:

At present the church has no parking and relies on the goodwill of the local farmer. We need parking to accommodate the growing congregation and community. Currently the Glebeland owned by the Diocese (? Acres) could provide this facility.

Entrance, through five bar gate, on the lane requires levelling and surface attention to enable vehicle access and parking.

Need: a) to explore matting option. b) Conditions of rental/lease explored. c) Create a pedestrian path through Open Churchyard/graveyard to entrance by War Memorial. Solar lighting required along path for access during night hours.

Supply of Water/Accessible Toilet:

Need: water supply for accessible toilet and ability to serve refreshments.

Clarify route for external and internal pipework. Architect to advise on water entry point and domestic related facilities.

Accessible Toilet:

Need: Architect advice required for position/location/type of toilet/handwashing etc within the church.

Heating and Light:

Need: Upgrade the heating in the whole church to meet environmental standards. Diocesan advisor to view current heating and lighting arrangements on how to make them more eco-friendly and efficient.

2.2 Set out the significance of these particular parts

Glebe Land

Current parking insufficient to meet the needs of a large rural congregation who have to use cars to get to the church. (Average Sunday attendance 50 – 60. Local farmer currently allows parking for church use, but will not continue in the future.

Parking also required for increased community use from across West Cornwall. Regular use by local school for concerts, assemblies, Harvest Festivals, Carol Services etc. Other events include increased programme of fundraising concerts throughout the year including International Musicians Seminar (IMS) Prussia Cove, Maile Voice Choirs, classical and popular musicians. In addition regular visits by pre-booked groups for fundraising guided tours of the church including cream teas etc. (average numbers 30 visitors). Visitors to Heritage Centre also need parking facilities.

Accessible Toilet & Water Supply

Currently there is only one toilet situated approximately 50 metres away from the church in an outside building. Unsuitable to young children and the elderly and/or those with access issues (not wheelchair compliant). In the past year the establishment of a Young Explorer's Group for primary aged children means that trips to the toilet disrupt their activities as in order to meet safeguarding legislation adults need to accompany each child and ensure the correct number of adults are present.

Concerts etc are often at night and in the dark – the current arrangements are unacceptable and distressing for any users.

Many events involve provision of refreshments and current arrangements present unavoidable difficulties including the carrying of heavy water bottles and removing cups and other crockery off site for washing, cleaning etc.

Heating and Lighting

Current arrangements are electric bar heaters placed well above head height and only in the nave and chancel. Heating is required in the side aisles and side chapels. Current heating system is wasteful and expensive.

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

Glebe Land – low impact

Accessible Toilet & Water Supply – Faculty for water supply already attained. Impact in Church Tower and/or Vestry depending on siting of toilet and other facilities. Impact Low/moderate

Heating – Dependant on new system – Low/moderate

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

Architect to advise on options and potential impacts.

Sources Consulted.

Pevesner: Buildings of England
Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England
English Heritage
St Hilary Heritage Centre
Kresen Kernow (Cornwall Archive Centre)
Diocesan Record Centre
Historic Environment Record (HER)
Richard Carew: Survey of Cornwall 1580-1602
Hitchens & Drew: The History of Cornwall 1824
Daniel Lysons: Magna Britannia Cornwall 1814
Lake's Parochial History of the County of Cornwall 1867

4. Why do you need it and why do you need it now?

Congregational Needs

In addition to growth in numbers of the Sunday and Wednesday Eucharists there is growth of the intergenerational attendance. Children and young people are now regularly part of the altar serving team.

Increased number of weddings and related baptisms; eg Sunday after Christmas 2024 (100 adults and 20 children).

Regular study groups throughout the year involving members of the congregation who feel confident to participate.

Outreach to Children and Young People

Young Explorers - primary age (KS1 &KS2) group held fortnightly after school in church numbers gradually increasing. Activity based approach related to readings/gospel for forthcoming Sunday.

Summer holiday programme 2024 included a weekly session based on the theme of pilgrimage including trip to Truro Cathedral.

Outreach to School

Open The Book team regularly go into St Hilary School (not a church school) and deliver assemblies to pupils in KS1.

Excellent relationship with school fostered and maintained through curriculum visits to church and church used for School events including end of Year assemblies, festivals and concerts.

Small Group Meetings etc

These Groups would be encouraged and developed by warm inviting space in which to meet and improved facilities.

Mission to Local Community

Enhanced by better facilities which would mean greater contact with the local community.