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RIAI ACCREDITED CONSERVATION ARCHITECT GRADE I

CONSERVATION METHOD STATEMENT for Historic Structures Fund 2024



Project Title: **ST JOHN'S CHURCH, KILL, CO KILDARE**

ROOF REPAIRS

Client: Naas Union of Parishes

Date: January 2024

Directors

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Introduction

St. John's Church was built in the 1820's on the site of an earlier church with funding from the Earl of Mayo and the Board of First Fruits. It is a three bay Gothic-style church with a tower to the west topped with a crenellated pediment and stone needle spire. There is also a crenellated pediment on the flat roofed porch on the north side of the tower. A single bay chancel extends to the east and a single storey vestry to the south.

Inside the church has a segmental-vaulted plaster ceiling to the nave and timber vaulting to the chancel. The central aisle is tiled with Peake's tiles in a diaper pattern and there are decorative patterns of Minton tiles in both the chancel and around the font in the south west corner. The church originally had a gallery at the west end, a high pulpit and box pews. These were removed in 1883 when renovations were made and the chancel was built at the east end. Open pews and a lower pulpit were fitted and a circular window was put into the west end with stained glass featuring an image of a descending dove.

There is an organ chamber on the North side of the nave just before the chancel which contains an 18th century organ which was enlarged at a later date and purchased for St. John's Church by Lady Mayo in 1888.

The chancel gable contains a stained glass window depicting the Ascension by Cox, Sons, Buckley & Co., Youghal & London. It was gifted by the Earl of Clonmell in memory of his mother the Countess of Clonmell. There is also stained glass in the east most window on the north side of the nave depicting the parable of the Good Samaritan by Heaton, Butler & Bayne, London erected in memory of the 4th Earl of Clonmell who died in 1891.

There are a number of stone and brass memorials on the walls and some fine carved timber pieces including Glastonbury chairs, prayer desks and a font cover.

Entrance to the church grounds is from Main Street and there is a graveyard to the south of the church that pre-dates the current building.

Protection Status

The church is a protected structure (RPS ref. B19-43)

NIAH Record

Registration No. 11815019; Rating 'Regional'.

- Description: Detached three-bay double-height Board of First Fruits-style Gothic-style Church of Ireland church, built 1827, with lancet-arch openings, single-bay single-storey gabled vestry projection to south-east, single-bay double-height lower chancel to north-east and single-bay three-stage tower to south-west on a square plan having single-bay single-storey flat-roofed projecting porch to north-west, battlemented parapet and needle spire. Gable-ended roofs with slate (gabled to vestry projection). Clay ridge tiles. Cut-stone coping to gables. Rendered chimney stack to apex to vestry projection. Cast-iron rainwater goods on eaves course. Flat-roof to porch behind battlemented parapet. Materials not visible. Cut-stone needle spire to tower behind battlemented parapet. Roughcast walls over rubble stone construction. Unpainted. Rendered dressings including battlemented parapet wall to porch, moulded stringcourses to tower and battlemented parapet wall having corner pinnacles. Lancet-arch openings. Stone sills. Cut-stone surrounds (block-and-start to opening to north-east) with hood mouldings over. Traceried diamond-ledged Gothic-style windows (timber windows to vestry projection; 1/1 timber sash windows to porch). Paired window openings to first stage to tower in square frame having cut-stone surround with hood moulding over. Lancet-arch openings to third stage. Hood moulding over. Louvered timber panels. Lancet-arch door opening to porch approached by flight of steps. Hood moulding over. Timber panelled double doors. Set back from road in own grounds.

Graveyard to site with various cut-stone grave markers, c.1600-present. Gateway, c.1820, to north-east comprising pair of granite ashlar piers with fluted capping and wrought iron double gates having rubble stone boundary wall to boundary.

- Appraisal: Saint John's Church is a fine and well-maintained Church of Ireland church that resembles the churches funded by the Board of First Fruits – conversely it is not entirely unlike the contemporary Catholic church to north-east (11815002/KD-19-15-02), which is an unusual occurrence. The nave of the church is composed as a stout edifice, relieved through the use of substantial lancet-arch openings that contain fine tracery and early diamond-leded fenestration. The reserved tone of the nave is off-set by the tower to south-west, the slender needle spire of which soars above the surrounding landscape adding incident to the skyline and identifying the church in the locality. Finely detailed, an attractive feature is the Gothic-style porch to north-west, while cut-stone or render is use throughout the tower to distinguish the various stages. The church retains many important early or original salient features, including fenestration, a slate roof, render or cut-stone detailing, and it is probable that an early interior of note survives intact within. The church is of considerable social interest as the religious centre for the Protestant community in the locality – possibly built on the site of an earlier church, the present model is important for continuing a long-standing ecclesiastical presence in the village - and is an attractive landmark in the centre of Kill. Attractively set in its own grounds the church is complemented by a picturesque attendant graveyard, the cut-stone grave markers of which are of some artistic interest, while a number date to pre-1700 and are of archaeological significance. The entrance to the grounds is identified on the side of the road by a fine gateway, which reveals high quality stone masonry in the construction of the piers, while the gates are an early surviving example of iron work.

Recorded Monuments

The ecclesiastical enclosure of St. John's Church and a number of other elements within it have been identified as Recorded Monuments, protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930 – 2004;

KD019-008007 – Ecclesiastical enclosure

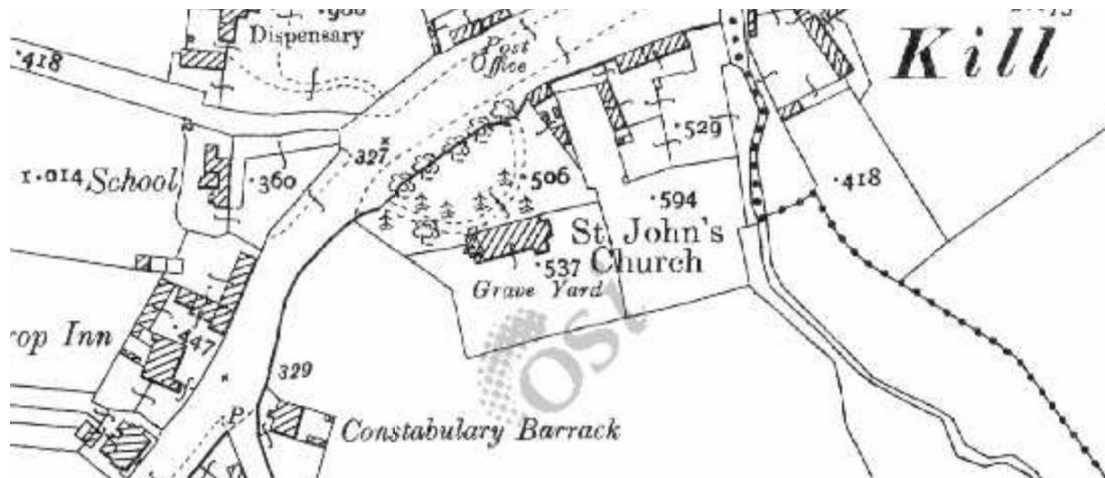
KD019-008005 – Font – Square limestone font located outside N door of church, possibly 16th century.

KD019-008008 – Graveyard – rectangular shape enclosed by post-1700 stone wall

KD019-008009 – Headstone – William Leasie, dated 1699



OS Map extract – first edition



OS Map extract – 25inch map

Condition

Although St. John's Church is well maintained the following areas are in need of immediate attention to avoid any damage to the interior features of the church.

- Roof: There are a number of areas with slipped slates across both slopes of the roof showing nail failure and other slates are damaged and cracked. Some areas have been repaired and slates have been clipped when slates have slipped/fallen and re-slating of the roof is now overdue.
- Gutters have been repaired/replaced in the past but there is an issue with the gutter/downpipe at the north east corner of the nave where water is staining the exterior of the church and moisture damage is visible to the interior of the church with areas of paint damaged/flaking including on the wall beside the organ.
- The chimney in the south slope of main roof is in need of repairs. Slates have slipped around it and the lead flashings need to be repaired/renewed. The flaunching to the top of the chimney is cracked and pieces are missing. The flue is no longer in use but remains open allowing debris to build up and rainwater to get in.

Proposed Works

- Re-slating main roof, re-using any sound existing slates with shortfall made up with new/salvaged welsh/blue bangor slates.
- Carpentry repairs to timber roof structure if necessary, new battens and new breather membrane.
- Lifting and re-laying of existing clay ridge tiles, with damaged/broken tiles replaced with new to match existing.
- Inspection of existing gutters and downpipes, particularly in north-east corner. Make any repairs necessary to stop water ingress into building including replacing damaged sections where necessary.
- Repairs to chimney at eaves on south slope including lead flashings, repairs to render and flaunching and fitting of clay flue cap.
- New lead flashings to barge stones at east end of main roof, with formation of secret lead gutter detail to match existing at west end junction with tower.

Conservation Approach and Supervision

All works to follow conservation principles, as formulated in ICOMOS charters and enshrined in international law. Works to be specified and carried out in close consultation with the RIAI Grade I accredited conservation architect. Architect to inspect the works and meet the contractor on site at the following stages:

- Briefing meeting with contractor once scaffolding is in place before any stripping or demolition is carried out.
- Inspection of roof timbers after stripping to advise on and approve level and method of repair.
- Inspection during repair of structural timber, incl. approval of slate samples, and gutters, underlay, etc.
- Inspection during repairs to chimney.
- Inspection during reslating work and leadwork, including approval of replacement ridge tiles to be rebbed in lime mortar.
- Inspection of completed works before removal of scaffolding.

Stripping of Slates and Repairs to Timber Structure

- Carefully lift ridge cappings, set aside and protect for reuse.
Note: This is a common location for bat roosts (see section on Bat Protection below).
- Measure grading of courses of existing slates. There are three narrow courses of slates at the top just below the ridge and a couple of wider courses above the eaves. This grading is to be recreated when re-slating roof.
- Strip existing slates, handling carefully to minimise damage. At least 50% of surviving slates should be fit for reuse. Existing slate sizes to be confirmed.
- All sound slates to be retained. Sound slates with damaged edges to be redressed with slate cutter. If too short these may be used as undercloaks at eaves or in ridge course. Ensure that existing nail-hole positions do not compromise water tightness of roof.
- Slates with serious staining and lichen growth to be cleaned to give more even appearance to roof after re-slating is complete.
- Carefully sort slates according to size and thickness. Store slates for reuse on edge in batches of twenty separated by a timber batten. If stored on scaffolding ensure adequate support and protection from damage.
- Repairs to timber structure to follow principle of 'minimal intervention', i.e. all sound timber to be retained in situ; partly decayed rafters to be splice-repaired to restore structural integrity.
- Architect to approve extent of timber replacement prior to removal.
- Where timber merchant's markings are present in historic timbers these to be drawn to attention of architect and recorded.
- Splice repairs to rafters (up to 125mm depth): Remove only loose rotted timber. Insert splice rafter with overlap of min 1m on sound original timber, thickness 44mm, depth to match existing. Fix splice rafter with 6 no. woodscrews of 5mm diameter and approx 80mm length. Pre-drill new splice timber.
- Where splice repair impracticable, new full-length rafter to be inserted alongside original, original rafter to remain in place with rotted section removed.
- Where masonry is damp lay damp-proof membrane as separation from new timber.
- Wall plates: Replacement of rotted wall plates. Wall plates to be replaced only where decayed with timber of matching type and equal dimension.

- Repairs to trusses and ceiling supports (ceiling to be retained)
- Ensure adequate protection to raised decorative plasterwork ceiling to first floor.
- Remove all debris from roof space, lime mortar parging, nesting twigs, etc

Re-slating

- Measure original slating battens and use new battens of same thickness to avoid raising of roof level. Use pre-treated battens and treat cut ends with approved product.
- Lay breathable underlay. Sample to be approved in advance by architect.
- Reuse original slate on north facing slope, and any remaining slates with new/salvaged on south facing slope.
- Shortfall to be made up with salvaged slate from other source. Samples to be approved by the architect; written verification to be provided that the building from which slate was salvaged has been reslated or demolished. Slates stripped from standing unroofed buildings not to be used.
- Alternative: Use matching Welsh natural slate, Blue Bangor or approved equivalent. Samples to be approved by the architect.
- Slates to be graded by thickness and size, with longer and thicker slates in lower courses. Slates to be fixed with copper nails with flat heads. Slate hooks not to be used.
- Undercloaks at eaves to be bedded face down. NB: Artificial slates not to be used for undercloaks. Larger slate course at eaves to be maintained where present.
- New slates if used also to be sorted by thickness to ensure an even finished surface.
- Reset stone ridge cappings using hydraulic lime mortar NHL3.5 or NHL 5 with sharp sand aggregate to neat detail approved by architect. New replacements for damaged/missing sections to match existing.
- Fit counter-batten to ensure cross ventilation of roof with insect mesh strip beneath eaves. Eaves detail to allow ventilation to enter roof space along full length.

Rainwater goods

- Existing gutters and downpipes to be inspected and any damaged/broken sections to be repaired or replaced.

Bat Protection

- As bats are a protected species under Irish and EU legislation where bats are found to be hibernating, roosting or breeding within the structure all work must ensure the protection of bats, and must enable, where relevant, roosting conditions and access for bats in the future. Guidance set out throughout this specification to be closely adhered to.
- If bats are found to be present in the structure during works, stop work, inform architect, and seek advice from local NPWS Conservation Ranger or NPWS Bat Helpline 1800 405 0000.
- New timber to be pre-treated. Chemical treatment of existing timbers to use bat-safe products only ('mammal friendly' mark). Architect to approve prior to use.
- Pointing of stonework: Check crevices with torch to make sure no roosting or hibernating bat is present. Pointing work to be done by hand, no pressure grouting to be undertaken.

Scaffolding

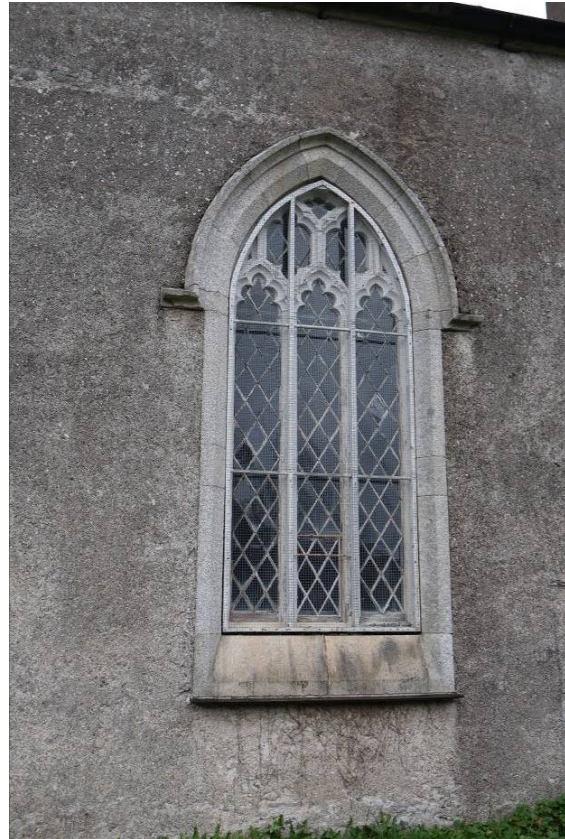
- No fixings to be fixed into the walls of the church. Scaffolding to be propped and supported from ground level.

PHOTOGRAPHS

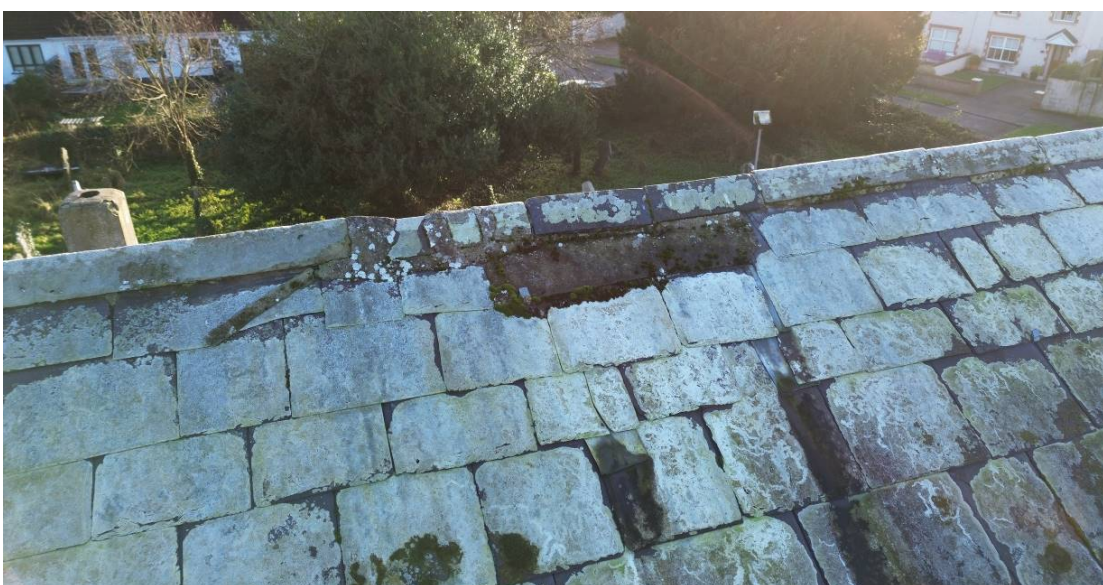
Exterior













Chimney in southern slope



Downpipe in north-east corner

Interior

