

THOMAS  
FORD  
& PARTNERS  
CHARTERED  
ARCHITECTS  
SURVEYORS



QUEENBOROUGH, HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

Combined Statement of Significance and Need

Prepared for the PCC of Holy Trinity Church

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692607

177 KIRKDALE SYDENHAM LONDON SE26 4QH 020 8659 3250

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## 1. Aims of the Statement of Significance

- 1.1 The Statement of Significance aims to establish from sources readily available a view of the significance of the building and places of Holy Trinity Church, Queenborough, Kent. The original statement of significance was drawn up in 2012 by John Bailey of Thomas Ford & Partners and has been re evaluated and revised as part of this process.
- 1.2 The Statement of Significance is designed to be a tool, which will allow the careful management of change within, or associated with Holy Trinity Church, Queenborough.

## 2. Summary

- 2.1 Holy Trinity Church is Listed Grade II\* as a building of outstanding architectural and historical importance. The building is an integral part of a new town laid out by Edward III and great detail is known about its construction. The building has been an integral part of the town for 700 years. The internal painted ceiling of 1695 is of national importance and the building contains a number of internal items of national importance, in particular the font, dated 1610 and the Corporation pews which are often compared with those surviving at Newport Minster on the Isle of Wight.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 The Statement of Significance has been drawn up in light of the proposal to replace the existing 19<sup>th</sup> century hall and vestry building.
- 3.2 The Statement of Significance has been prepared by John Bailey of Thomas Ford & Partners in August 2020. The statement will be circulated to the Diocese of Canterbury, English Heritage, the National Amenity Societies, Swale Borough Council and the PCC as part of the consultation process in connection with the works to replace the vestry building.
- 3.3 The Statement of Significance is drawn up only from sources currently available. The Statement is an evolving document and will need to be reassessed in the future.

## 4. Understanding the Site

### Location of Queenborough

- 4.1 Queenborough town lies on the Swale around a creek south of Sheerness. The town is on low lying marshland close to the modern A249 and stands on the railway line to Sheerness.

### The Site

- 4.2 Holy Trinity Church stands in its own churchyard to the north of the High Street, close to the Guildhall in the centre of the medieval 14<sup>th</sup> century town.

## History of Queenborough

- 4.3 The Isle of Sheppey lies on the north Kent coast and has been home to human habitation for thousands of years. The island is separated from the mainland by the Swale, a navigable stretch of water still in use today. In 664 Minster Abbey was founded by St Sexburgha and this Abbey dominated the island until the mid-16th century. The island however suffered during the Danish raids, the first of which was in 835, and later in the pre-Norman period in 1052 when the island suffered at the hands of Earl Godwin's followers.
- 4.4 Until the 17th century the island had a mainly agricultural economy. However, this all changed in 1665 when the great Royal Naval Dockyards were founded at Sheerness. This dockyard, complete with major defences, remained in use until 1960 and today remains a major local employer as a civilian port.
- 4.5 The origins of Queenborough are obscure. The town is located on a promontory, almost an island in itself, at the entry of the Swale and Thames on the main medieval shipping route which used the Swale and Wantsum to avoid the Thames. It is certain there was a town here before the 14th century and Chaucer states the port was a major wool staple port. Early references exist between 669 and 690 and in 893 the Danish prince Huestan had a fort at Queenborough. In Saxon times the town was called Cyningburn or Kings Borough.
- 4.6 Queenborough as we know it today is credited to Edward III who re-fortified the town and laid out a new town named after his Queen, Phillipa of Hainault. The port was used by the King to travel to the low countries. The town was dominated by the castle, described as the ultimate expression of the concentric castle. This outstandingly important structure survived until 1650 when it was sold by Parliament for demolition to Mr John Wilkinson for £1,792.
- 4.7 The port did not remain important for long as the right to wood staples granted in 1368 was soon withdrawn. By the 17th century it was in decline. Defoe described Queenborough as "a miserable, dirty, decayed, poor, pitiful fishing town". In the 18th century, however the Corporation must have been reasonably well off to have constructed the Guildhall in 1793.
- 4.8 Despite poor fortunes the town continued to survive. Matthias Falconer founded England's first copperas factory in 1579. Elizabeth I granted the Town Charter in 1571 and the Spanish Admiral Don Geronimo was held prisoner in the castle from 1588 until his death.
- 4.9 From the 17th century the fortunes of Queenborough were bound up with those of the great Naval dockyard at Sheerness. Charles I had reincorporated the town and it had survived the Dutch raid of 1667, but from 1850 onwards matters improved. The railway arrived in 1860 and industries such as glass works, coal washing, fertilizer and cement manufacturing all started up. In 1899 naval barracks known as HMS Wildfire III were built and the town was the centre of mine sweeping until after the Second World War.
- 4.10 Today employment is provided by the now civilian docks and the prison on the inland as well as some commuting to London.
- 4.11 The Sheerness dockyards gave Queenborough a new lease of life as employment was provided from the 17th century. Today employment is still provided in the civilian port. The railway also arrived in the 1860s.

## Associations with Historic People

- 4.12 The most significant association is with Edward III and Queen Phillipa after whom the town is named. He is not only credited with founding the new town but stayed there regularly.
- 4.13 It is known that Hogarth stayed in the town and Lord Nelson took communion at the church.
- 4.14 Sir Joseph Williamson, Principal Secretary for State to King Charles II, is associated with the church and gave the outstanding silver in 1674 which is now at Leeds Castle.
- 4.15 Other notable associations are to the Spanish Admiral Don Geronimo who is buried at Minster. Dr William Parry MP who was executed for plotting against Elizabeth I.

## Architectural Development of Holy Trinity Church

- 4.16 Unusually for a medieval church, we not only know when work commenced on building Holy Trinity Church (originally dedicated to St James until the 15th century), but also who undertook the work and how much it all cost. This is because the church was part of a new town planned by Edward III in conjunction with his new castle at Queenborough.
- 4.17 Once work was well advanced on the castle the town was laid out and work commenced on Holy Trinity in 1366. We know that John Rokesacre was working on the walls and gates and that he was paid £16 by Simon de Bradested, Clerk of the King's Works in Sheppey, to construct the main walls of the church. We also know that Thomas Crompe of Maidstone lead the masons who undertook the window tracery and the iron window bars were made in the Tower of London smithy by Stephen-atte-Towre.
- 4.18 The main carpentry for the church was undertaken by Henry Crotehall at a cost of £11.3s.4d. Robert Scotland plastered the walls for 30s, John Tournour was paid 4s for desks in the chancel and John Beneyt was paid 40s for stone steps up to the altar. Construction on the church is said to have been completed in 1367.
- 4.19 The church as originally constructed consisted of only the nave and chancel with no division between the two sections. Whether the porch was part of the original construction is not known. The western tower is probably later, 15th century in date. The exact date is not known but in 1481 John Stamforte, Burgess of the town, left 6s.8d. to the work of the tower.
- 4.20 Holy Trinity Church reappears architecturally in the 17th century. In 1607 a petition to the King was sent. This stated that the steeple which was an important navigation marker was open to the elements, ruinous and decayed. The town had undertaken some repairs but it was estimated the tower needed, essentially, rebuilding at a cost of £600. On 7th April 1636 the King himself sponsored an appeal to all the parishes of England for money, but only a quarter of the necessary funds were raised. This led to only repairs being carried out, including the addition of the two large western buttresses.
- 4.21 In 1721 Thomas King, Lieutenant Governor of Sheerness, paid for a major refurbishment of the church. This is recorded in an inscription which states this building "was raised, paved, pewed and ceiled and the gallery erected with the altar and painting to it." The Kent bell ringers website says the church was burnt in 1719. This might have led to the restoration. It is also possible that the ceiling decoration dates from this restoration. The theme is the firmament of the sky and the artist was probably Dutch or Flemish. It is more likely though that it dates to circa 1695.

- 4.22 Holy Trinity underwent a major restoration at the hands of Joseph Clarke between 1884 and 1886. This work was fairly comprehensive and included the casting and re-hanging of the bells, the removal of the 18th century interior and its replacement with the present interior, and overall general redecoration. The cost of this work was £3,334. On the north side of the church is located the corrugated iron clad timber framed church hall/vestry linked through the medieval north door. This room does not appear on the 1884 plan at Lambeth Palace Library, drawn by Joseph Clarke, so is assumed to be post-1886, but is likely to be pre-1900.
- 4.23 In 1933 (15th December) the tower caught fire during a major storm. The tower was gutted and all the floors and interiors date from this period. The remainder of the church was saved but the outstanding nave ceiling painting remains smoke-blackened

#### Fixtures, Fittings & Monuments

- 4.24 The nave and chancel ceiling is of outstanding historic importance and may date from circa 1695. The theme is the firmament of the sky and is perhaps unique in an English church. The ceiling has white clouds and golden stars. At the east end cherubims in smaller medallions surround a centrepiece which depicts the Angel of the Apocalypse surrounding the last trump. This ceiling is of national importance.
- 4.25 The tower has a ring of six bells. Four of these are dated 1667 by Anthony Bartlett, the others are dated 1911 and 1934. All were re-hung in 1981.
- 4.26 The Whale Tablet commemorates Henry Knight, mariner, Mayor of the Borough and master of a ship that travelled to Greenland. The monument has an important inscription.
- 4.27 The paintings of Moses and Aaron are on boards from a reredos and date to around 1700.
- 4.28 The chancel contains the corporation seats and above these hang the Royal Arms of Queen Anne, inscribed AR 1713, still in its original gilt frame. The seats retain the head of King Charles I as the head of a lion, showing loyalty to the king who gave the town its Charter.
- 4.29 The two candelabra were given to the church by George Isles who was Mayor of the Borough six times and were presented in 1718 and 1724.
- 4.30 The font is of exceptional importance. Octagonal in form and dated 1610, it is inscribed "Nicholas Tylar ivret of this Tovne". The font has a detailed representative of the postern gate of Queenborough Castle on it. The timber cover is original.
- 4.31 The charity boards are of particular interest. One tells the story of two gentlemen, names unknown, who gave £40 in thanksgiving following their shipwreck in Queenborough.

## 5. Wider Site Issues

### Site Ecology

- 5.1 There has been no specific ecological or geological assessment of Holy Trinity Church and the churchyard. If the historical notes are correct the town was founded in the 1360s by Edward III on marshland. It is unlikely that there are any significant archaeological remains on the site but the possibility cannot be ruled out. In the 17th century notes state you could not be buried at Holy Trinity as all burials were at Minster. It is therefore likely that there are no significant burial layers on the site pre-dating the 18th century.

## Site Amenity

- 5.2 The church and churchyard are an open space in the town and the churchyard is crossed by a footpath. The churchyard is crossed and visited by significant numbers of people each day.

## Landscape Values and Aesthetics

- 5.3 The church tower is not particularly dominant within the town or the wider landscape. However, the church is pivotal to the townscape as an integral part of the original new town layout.

## Current Usage & Social Importance

- 5.3 The church building is not only used to worship but also secular events and is an integral part of the social life of the town. In the last 5 years the parish have been trying very hard to grow the number of events within the church and the church is now open daily. This has significantly increased the number of people using the building.

## 6. Significance of Holy Trinity Church, its context and setting

- 6.1 Holy Trinity Church is Listed Grade II\* as a building of national, historical and architectural importance. It is located within the Queenborough Conservation Area. The statement has concluded that the following points are significant.

### **External Significance (of national importance)**

- No items.

### **Outstanding Significance (high local or regional significance)**

- The historical information on the construction of the church and the fact it was built of a single phase.
- The painted ceiling, circa 1695.
- The links with the Borough.
- The buildings place within a new town laid out in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and its setting in the townscape.
- The outstanding font, circa 1610.
- The Whale Tablet.
- The four bells of 1667.
- The Royal Arms, candelabra and paintings, circa 1700.

- 6.2 Unusually it is worth noting that the late 19<sup>th</sup> century corrugated vestry/hall detracts from the significance of the building (comment written in 2012)

## 7. Assessment of the Impact of the Proposals on the Significance of Holy Trinity Church

- 7.1 It is important to note that the vast majority of the historic fabric at Holy Trinity Church will remain unaltered. The principal view from the South remains unchanged, and the most significant monuments, fixtures and fittings also remain unchanged. In order for this building to survive in use and develop a sustainable liturgical and financial future and remain in use into the 21<sup>st</sup> century further change is inevitable to create a viable and sustainable future based on the PCC's needs and aspirations.
- 7.2 The current proposals leave the interior of the historic church essentially unaltered, apart from works to make the building more accessible and provide level access between the main church and the proposed vestry.
- 7.3 There is general agreement that there is insufficient space within the main building to accommodate the necessary facilities without considerably harming the internal volumetric appreciation of the building. The proposed replacement structure to the north will improve the views of the church from the East, West and North as it will replace the existing vestry structure that is in a poor state of repair and which is not aesthetically in keeping with the context of the church or the Queenborough Conservation Area. The proposed new extension will be visually subservient to the historic Nave and will be constructed of dwarf masonry and timber clad walls and a handmade plain tile roof to match the existing church.

## 8. Parish Overview

### Current Church Use

8.1 Holy Trinity Church is widely used. The following is a resume of current use.

- The church is used for annual civic services and major national events.
- The church is used for concerts at least monthly as well as special service, weddings and funerals.
- The church is open daily for private pray and visitors who increasingly come to Queenborough.
- The regular services have seen a slow and steady growth in numbers building sustainability.

### Worship and Liturgical Use

- 8.2 On Sundays there is a regular Common Prayer Service held at 11am. This is held in the church and is attended by 25-35 people.
- 8.2 The church is open throughout the day for private worship and reflection. Currently small mid-week communion is not held in the church building, but in Holy Trinity Sheerness, because the church is not a comfortable environment as it is too cold.
- 8.4 For the larger festivals and church services, the building is well attended and used. The following is a résumé:
- Christmas
    - Christmas Day 40-50 people
    - Christingle Service 100-160 people



Carol's by Candlelight	50-60 people
Christmas Tree Festival	150-200 people

- Easter is attended by 50-70 people with similar attendances at Mothering Sunday and Remembrance. Harvest is also similarly attended.
- The church regularly has funerals which on occasions have been attended by between 100+ people. There are also a number of weddings held each year.
- The annual Blessing of the Waters Service is held by the Church at Crundell's Wharf which is attended by local fishermen, sailors, the lifeboats and pilot boats.

#### Social and Secular Use

8.5 Holy Trinity Church is used for occasional concerts which are usually attended by around 40 people. The Marathon is attended by over 100 people. The Church also hosts an annual Flower Festival in June and a number of other events throughout the year.

### 9.0 The Need of Holy Trinity Church

#### Issues affecting the use of the building

9.1 Holy Trinity Church is underused as it currently has no toilet provision and no kitchen facilities, making it an undesirable venue for both church events and secular use. Despite this the congregation is growing, although the existing facilities do not allow people fully use of the church.

9.2 The existing vestry building is heavily under used because there are a number of fundamental problems with it. These problems are as follows:

- The building is timber framed with a suspended timber floor. The floor structure has partly collapsed in the past and is known to be in poor condition. The building slumps in places and it is suspected that the timber frame is rotten in areas and there are open joints in the construction generally. Repairing the building is not economically viable.
- The building has no insulation in it and is very damp and cold. In addition, it is impossible to heat and has no permanent heating system.
- There is no toilet in the building and no permanent drainage.
- Access into the building is not possible for wheelchair users as there are two steps up from the Nave. There is also no secondary means of escape in case of fire. The door from the church however has a clear opening of 860mm.
- Because the building looks in poor condition it is vandalised and generally neglected.
- Because the building is generally in poor condition, needs complete rebuilding and is uninviting it is not used, reducing the mission of the church and preventing the parish moving forwards.

#### Perceived Need

9.14 The Parish have a clear vision for Holy Trinity with the aim of getting not only more people to worship but also to see the church used for more social and secular events. To achieve this, they have concluded the following:

- There is a need for a fully accessible toilet.
- There is a need for a kitchenette to serve tea, cake and simple meals.
- There is a need for a space to meet.
- There is a need for good quality storage.

## 10. The Proposal

- 10.1 It has been generally agreed that the existing Vestry building is of no architectural merit and is in such a poor state of repair that replacement is the only sensible option. Additionally, the current vestry building is constructed of materials containing asbestos which pose a danger to the health of users.
- 10.1 The proposed new vestry building will occupy the same footprint as the existing vestry structure, and follow the same form.

## 11. Why Does the Holy Trinity Church Need These Facilities Now?

- 11.1 In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century people do not attend church because they feel they should. There are so many other things to do on a Sunday. We know from discussions with the congregation and others who use the church, or would like to, that without proper toilet and kitchen facilities people will simply stop coming. For many reasons today people need these facilities such as toilets to even be able to attend events and for modern safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults these facilities are essential. In addition, a properly heating room is essential, as in cold winters the church building has to be abandoned for worship which is not good either for the congregation or the building itself.
- 11.3 Holy Trinity Church is still seen as relevant to most in the parish, but this is starting to change as people start to come to and use the building less. If we do not grasp this opportunity now and say put the project off for another 10 years, we may well be simply too late. What all those involved with Holy Trinity Church wish to avoid at all costs is the present historic church becoming irrelevant, unusable and liturgically and financially unsustainable. The signs are already there. If we can get people to use and appreciate Holy Trinity Church, then the historic building survives, and the worshipping and secular communities grow and thrive.

## 12. Justification

- 12.1 The PCC have made a compelling case for a sustainable worshipping and secular use for Holy Trinity Church which cannot be achieved unless there is modest change. We fully believe that the harm to the historic church is minimal, as compared with the huge benefits of sustainable worshipping and secular use, which in turn will create a sustainable financial future without which the building will not be retained in the longer term.

### 13. Bibliography

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