

Statement of Significance

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

The civil parish of the Upper Deverills comprises the villages of Kingston Deverill, Monkton Deverill and Brixton Deverill. It lies some six miles south of Warminster. Brixton has a church – St Michael the Archangel – but Monkton’s (dedicated St Alfred the Great) was confirmed redundant in 1971. Therefore, St Mary the Virgin serves both Kingston Deverill and Monkton Deverill which together consist of 127 houses with about 250 inhabitants. St Mary’s is one of only two public buildings in the villages, the other being the 1950s-built village hall. In 1972 the church was joined with the churches of Brixton Deverill and Longbridge Deverill and later Horningsham to form the ecclesiastical parish of The Deverills and Horningsham, itself now part of the benefice of Cley Hill Villages.

The Cley Hill benefice is led by the Rector who lives in Longbridge Deverill. She is assisted by an Associate Priest and two Licenced Lay Ministers, together with occasional retired clergy.

The Parish is overseen by the Parochial Church Council (PCC), chaired currently by the Churchwarden at Kingston.

St Mary’s church offers services on alternate first Sundays – 8am Holy Communion – and alternate second Sundays – 10.30am Holy Communion.

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

i) Its special architectural and historical interest

ii) Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest

i) The existence of a Saxon church on the present site of St Mary’s was confirmed by the discovery of a font from that period during the extensive renovations in the 1840s. It is now in situ at the west end of the church. In 1099 the Chapel of St Andrew was registered on this site. During the Victorian renovations a stone ‘effigy of a noble’ was found thought by Pevsner to date from the C13th. The first rector of Kingston Deverill was registered in 1302. It is likely that the medieval church that we see now (with Victorian additions and alterations) was built around that time or slightly later, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin. The tower is 14thC and there were minor additions during the next five centuries.

Between the years of 1842–47 the church was extensively renovated and refurbished, funded in the main by the Marchioness of Bath. These changes were chiefly to the nave, the south aisle and entrance porch. Extra pews were installed and a vestry extension constructed on the north side.

The church itself is listed Grade II*.

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ii) Within the church the features worthy of particular interest are:

- The Saxon font (specified in this application for repair)
- The C13th stone 'effigy'
- A late C15th stained glass window light
- A wooden statue of the Madonna and Child from the C14th.
- The C17th pulpit
- The Victorian ceiling wooden rafters, beams, braces and mouldings

In the churchyard there is a Grade II listed late C18th chest tomb and a 1930s war memorial, again listed Grade II.

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

The impact of the proposals will be entirely internal and, in most cases, minimal. The vestry will be substantially altered to accommodate a fully accessible WC and the current doorway (itself a Victorian alteration) widened to allow access to wheelchairs and pushchairs. This will enhance the wooden mouldings. The new heating, lighting and audio schemes will be, in architectural terms, near-replacements for the existing fittings. The font will be repaired to its near-original state. The preparation area/servery will be in the form of fittings and will not require any material alterations to the structure of the church, save attachment fixings. Six of the Victorian wooden pews will be removed to free up social space at the west end, surrounding the font, and two further pews will be removed to facilitate access to the WC and the preparation area/servery. The floor will be made good to reflect existing materials. Apart from work to the font, none of the features of particular interest noted in Section 2 will be affected.

