

‘Rediscovering our Parish Churches’ English Heritage and the Diocese of Salisbury Partnership Project

Part One: Historical, Architectural and Archaeological Review

Zeals, St Martin

- 1.1 *Deanery:* Heytesbury 1.2 *Civil parish:* Zeals
- 1.3 *Church address:* Portnell’s Lane, Zeals, Wiltshire, BA12 6NL
- 1.4 *Grid reference:* ST7807831774
- 1.5 *Listing grade:* Grade II* 1.6 *Scheduled ancient monument:*
(Listing descriptions appended in section 7)
- 1.7 *Is the church in a conservation area?* No.
- 1.8 *Does the church stand in a churchyard?* Yes.
- 1.9 *Date of visit:* 8 October, 2008 1.10 *Report by:* Martin Cherry
- 1.11 *Contact made on site:* Roland Martin
- 1.12 *Sources consulted:* Incorporated Church Building Society, Lambeth Palace Library, file 13679. *Ecclesiologist*, 12 (1851), p. 150. Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry, *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 603. *Kelly’s Directory of Wiltshire* (London, 1935), p. 300. Gwyneth F. Jackson (and others), *A Tale of Two Manors: Zeals, a Wiltshire Village* (Castle Cary, 1997), especially pp. 25-34.

2. A STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Zeals church is a relatively early work by the celebrated Victorian architect, George Gilbert (later Sir G.G.) Scott. Scott’s career encompasses the history of the Victorian Gothic revival movement (of which he was a leader) from its early days – characterised by the search for a truly catholic style rooted in the architecture of the English middle ages based on careful study and the use of correct archaeological detail – to a more individual and imaginative treatment of gothic forms that looked for inspiration to continental as well as English models, and which resulted in some of the greatest buildings of the age. Scott published a number of scholarly studies of medieval architecture, was prominent in the professional debates of the time, and created some of the acknowledged masterpieces of the period such as the Albert Memorial and the Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras station in London. St Martin’s comes early in his career, when he was in partnership with W.B. Moffat (who specialised in public institutional buildings such as workhouses), and shows him mastering the requirements of the high Anglican churchmen who wished to see more

frequent services, more dignified worship and a greater emphasis on the Eucharist which required a well-proportioned, long chancel. Scott used the fashionable 'Decorated' style from the early 14th century and the details are fine and accurate, for instance the deeply-cut arches that give into the chancel and the organ chamber and the robust and powerful roofs – notably, the impressive hammer-beam roof over the nave. Originally the stone pulpit was entered from the vestry behind (where the organ chamber now is) and the blocked doorway can still be seen: this was not an unusual arrangement for churches of the time, for it allowed the priest to conveniently divest his surplice in order to preach in his cassock as Anglican custom demanded. This arrangement was changed at St Martin's later in the century when the pulpit was reduced in height and accessed in the normal way.

Fittings and furnishings Good quality furnishings and fittings date both from 1845-6 and a re-ordering of the mid-1860s (probably when the pulpit was rearranged). Although some wall decoration has subsequently been painted over and some tiling (notably in the sanctuary) concealed by carpets, the church is an excellent example of a small rural church of the 1840s by an up and coming architect who would later become one of the legends of the age.

3. THE BUILDING: ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, SETTING AND CONTENTS

Listing and Sites & Monuments descriptions appended?

Listing: Yes SAM: N/A

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Zeals in the early 19th century was considered to be one of the most under-provisioned places in the diocese in terms of church accommodation; its people lived in great poverty; and by 1845, the Anglicans were also becoming worried about the spread of nonconformity. A campaign to build a new church, parsonage and national school was spearheaded by the rector of nearby Melbury Abbas and land was provided by the duke of Somerset. The new buildings were erected in 1845-6.

The church tower appears to have caused problems from the beginning. *The Ecclesiologist* considered the tower to be 'very ugly, the second stage being hexagonal, a clumsy pinnacle being placed at each of the corners' and so badly constructed that 'the walls are splitting from side to side'. This magazine represented the Cambridge Camden Society, the 'hard line' end of the liturgical and architectural reform movement of the second quarter of the 19th century. Its writings deeply influenced Scott himself – he admitted that he had hardly given stylistic correctness a second thought before he started reading *The Ecclesiologist* in the early 1840s – but he never considered himself to be one of its favoured sons. Around the time he was working on Zeals, Scott was also preparing his international competition entry for St Nicholas church Hamburg, which he won and about which *The Ecclesiologist* was equally rude. So, St Martin's stands at an important point in Scott's career. The structural problems on the tower were rectified but the spire was not added until 1876.

3.2 THE CHURCH AND ITS PRINCIPAL FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS

3.2.1 *Building materials.* Locally quarried rock-faced limestone with Bath stone ashlar dressings, tiled roof with bands of plain and beaver-tailed tiles.

3.2.2 *Name(s) of architect(s), builder(s), patron(s) where known.* The church was largely financed by the rector of Melbury Abbas, William Frederick Grove (d.1847). The architects were Scott & Moffat; the building contractor was Charles Kirk of Sleaford who went on to become an architect in his own right. The chancel was embellished in the later 19th century and provided with a Minton tiled floor in 1867, the gift of Rev. C.B. Bicknell, rector of Stourton. Much of the 1860s chancel embellishment was carried out by the Chafyn-Grove family of nearby Zeals House (which was also largely rebuilt at this time). Significant roof repairs were carried out in 1959 (tie bars and concrete wall beams were inserted) by Potter & Hare of Salisbury, a leading ecclesiastical practice of the post-war period, and further repairs by the same practice in 1970.

3.2.3 *Plan form, principal construction phases and architectural features.* West tower with spire, nave, chancel with north vestry, south porch. The church dates almost entirely from 1845-6. A spire was always envisaged but the tower encountered structural problems and it was not added until 1876.



3.2.4 *Principal furnishings, fittings and decorations.* The quality of the stone carving is vigorous and results from Scott's close study of medieval sculpture and moulding profiles. The nave furniture dates from Scott's building, but the chancel furnishings appear to be later (although possibly also by him): the organ was installed in 1866 and the Minton tiles in 1867. The elegant choir stalls and frontals, and reredos may also be of this slightly later period. The chancel stained glass also dates from the late 1860s.

3.2.5 *Suggested corrections or additions to an existing listing description.* The list description is sufficientl full and accurate.

3.3 LISTED STATUS

3.3.1 *Is it judged to be appropriate?* Yes 3.3.2 *If not, suggestion.*

3.4 SETTING, CHURCHYARD, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND GREENSPACE/WILDLIFE POTENTIAL

3.4.1 *Setting.* St Martin's forms quite a dramatic landmark and occupies a walled neatly maintained churchyard with some mature trees and a number of headstones.

3.4.2 *Burials in the churchyard?* Yes. 3.4.3 *Still open for burials?* Yes.

3.4.4 *Archaeological significance/potential?* The churchyard has been used for burials since the mid-19th century. There appears to be little additional archaeological sensitivity.

3.4.5 *Green space/refuge for wildlife?* No.

3.4.6 *War memorial?* No

4. CURRENT USE AND FUTURE MANAGEMENT

4.1 CONDITION

4.1.1 *Is the church in poor/fair/good condition?* Good.

4.1.2 *Date of last Quinquennial Inspection Report.* October 2007.

4.1.3 *What significant works did it propose?* No major works are necessary but continued maintenance is essential, particularly to the tower and windows

4.1.4 *Work carried out since last QIR?* Vegetation growth has been removed from the tower.

4.1.5 *Work planned during the present quinquennium.* Window repairs are planned in accordance with the QIR.

4.1.6 *Summary of what works identified in the last QIR not carried out not carried out (and if possible explain why).* N/A

4.2 AMENITIES, ACCESSIBILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

4.2.1 *Does the congregation have access to all amenities that they require? Yes. Are these available in the church itself or in another nearby building?*

A new meeting room, toilets and tea/coffee-making facilities have been inserted at the west end of the nave and within the tower. The screen was removed from the east end of the nave to form doors into this new facility; the upper part forms a gallery with a low, glazed screen. Unfortunately, the room is under-used whilst the village hall is in great demand. A number of 1840s benches were removed during these works which also involved the insertion of a new west doorway: the standard of design and craftsmanship is high.

4.2.2 *If not, plans to introduce them?* N/A.
Impact on the church fabric? N/A.

4.2.3 *Is the church accessible?* Yes.

4.2.4 *Has a disability audit been carried out?* Yes.

4.2.5 *Have any measures been taken to provide facilities for the disabled and are any planned?* There is level access into the church from the west end. Disabled toilets are available. A hearing loop system is being considered.

4.2.6 *Environmental footprint. Has an audit been carried out?* No.
Measures implemented? None. *Measures planned?* None.

5. THE IMPACT OF CHANGE

St Martin's church has undergone considerable change in recent years, notably with the introduction at the west end of a community/meeting room, tea/coffee point and toilets, accessed by a separate new west door. These facilities are generous and well-finished (mobilising the 1920s former chancel screen as a new west partition). These works were made possible by a legacy. Unfortunately, no business plan appears to have been drawn up to gauge the possible impact on the facilities of the popular and successful village hall that serves most community functions. Consequently, the new rooms at the church normally stand idle. These changes, which involved the removal of some seating at the west end, have not adversely affected the quality of the internal spaces. No further plans for reordering are envisaged. The carpeting-over of some floor tiles and the painting out of some original mural decoration has probably gone as far as it should if the warm and glowing tones of the original Victorian colour-scheme are to be preserved. Having said this, the detailing of the 1860s stained glass has deteriorated badly although the original tonal effect survives: if at some point these windows require extensive renovation (as seems likely) it may be that new designs that are sensitive to the overall colour scheme might be acceptable over painstaking restoration of medium-quality glass of its day that has not weathered well.

6. CATEGORISATION OF ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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- **Category 1:** Churches of outstanding significance and limited adaptability for uses other than worship, with fabric and/or furnishings that should be protected from all but the most modest changes.
- **Category 2:** Churches of high significance that could nonetheless tolerate adaptive change if carefully and sympathetically managed.
- **Category 3:** Churches of significance, but with scope for more extensive alteration or adaptation in the interests of securing a sustainable future.
- **Category 4:** Churches of little architectural or historical significance. Many of these buildings serve their parishes very well and to describe them as being of little architectural or historic interest does not deny the contribution they might make in pastoral terms.

7. LISTING DESCRIPTION

Anglican parish church. 1842-46 by G.G. Scott, spire added 1876. Decorated style. Gabled south porch with moulded pointed chamfered doorway with attached shafts, diagonal buttresses and coped verge. South side of nave has one 2-light pointed window to left of porch, two 2-light pointed windows to right. Chancel has blind priest's doorway with 2-light pointed window either side, east end has diagonal buttresses and 3-light window, north side has 2-light window, vestry with pointed north doorway and pair of cusped ogee lancets, external stack, 2-light east and west windows. North side of nave has four 2-light windows, all windows with flowing tracery. Square 3-stage west tower has diagonal buttresses, string courses. 2-light west window, second stage has single-light leaded windows with cusped tracery and hoodmoulds, pinnacles to corners, offset octagonal bellstage with 2-light louvred windows, cornice with gargoyles to recessed spire with gabled windows and moulded finial. Polygonal stair turret with pointed doorway on south side. Interior: Porch has inner screen with double pointed doors, inner door to nave with double planked doors in pointed double chamfered archway. Nave has 4-bay hammer beam roof with stone corbels, arch-braced collar trusses to half-bays, tiled floors. Double chamfered tower arch with attached shafts, screen reset here from chancel arch. C14-style chancel arch with triple. moulded arch on compound pilasters. 1920s screen. Chancel has polychrome tiled floor, moulded pointed archway to organ chamber, chamfered pointed doorway to vestry to right, stone panelled reredos with carved vine frieze, trefoiled piscina on south wall. Other fittings; C19 pews and choir stalls, polygonal stone pulpit with traceried panels, octagonal stone carved font near south doorway. Monuments include stone gothic tablet in chancel to William Frederick Grove, founder of the church and school, died 1847, several brass plaques on nave walls, east window stained glass in memory of William Chafyn-Grove of Zeals House (q.v.). Church paid for by the Grove family of Zeals house, cost £2000, the builder was C. Kirk. A good early Scott interior. (N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Wiltshire*, 1975).

