

Statement of Significance – St James the Great, Westerleigh

1. Basic facts

Parish:	Ecclesiastical Parish of Yate New Town
Dedication:	St James The Great
Benefice:	Ecclesiastical Parish of Yate New Town
Diocese:	Diocese of Bristol
Address:	Westerleigh, Bristol, BS37 8QP
Grid ref, latitude, longitude:	ST700796; 51.5151N 2.434W
Local Planning Authority:	South Gloucestershire
County:	South Gloucestershire
Statutory Listing of church:	Grade 1
Statutory designation for structures and objects within churchyard:	Listed tomb
Conservation Area:	none
Scheduled Monument:	National monument 201265
Tree Preservation Orders:	no
Protected Species:	no
County Wildlife Site (or equivalent, or SSSI):	no
Any other designations:	no

2. Setting of the Church

St James the Great, Westerleigh is a grade 1-listed rural Anglican parish church, set in the centre of a large level churchyard alongside Westerleigh village green **with war memorial** and is situated near the edge of the Cotswold hills. The original church was a chapel of Pucklechurch, and was consecrated on April 16th 1304. Notable features include the tall slim tower, C5 sedilla, C17 carved screen and posts to tower base, a carved stone font, C18 gallery and C18 painted coat of arms.

3. The living churchyard

Habitat	The churchyard adjoins village playing field which in turn adjoin meadowland. About half the churchyard is left wild for long grasses and wild flowers; the other half is mown regularly and kept in good order.
Species	Churchyard is not host to any unusual or protected species, as far as it is known. Bat surveys in 2011 and 2012 did not find any bat nests in the roof. Visiting Peregrin Falcons have occasionally been sighted.
Trees	The churchyard has substantial trees including beech and yew, but not known to be subject to preservation orders.

4. Social History of Westerleigh and its church

887AD	The village is first mentioned in a Saxon document of 887AD, probably just a clearing in the woods possibly with a wooden church. Westerleigh is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086
1304	The church was consecrated in 1304. The northern wall and porch is from C14, as is the carved stone pulpit.
1600	By 1600 the village supported a shoemaker, a blacksmith, a sawyer, a flour mill, a malt house and two public houses. In 1617 John Crandall was baptised to James and Eleanor Crandall and became one of the founders of Westerly, Rhode Island, USA. The church was rebuilt in the perpendicular style, with the tower added later.
1660	The discovery of coal in 1660 provided employment for the villagers, with further finds at Coalpit Heath and Parkfield providing more employment. The mines closed in the 1930s, when the coal was exhausted.
1700-1800	In the late 1700s roads were built to Downend. In the 1800s Westerleigh junction became a crossing point of the new Great Western (east-west) and Midland railways (north-south).
1863	In 1863 lightning struck the church, and fire damaged much of the building and restoration followed soon after. In 1885 Richard Stevens became curate and following an ambitious series of restoration works, established Westerleigh as an independent parish. He had the organ built by J. G. Haskins in 1910.
1876	By 1876 occupations in the village included farmers, a bootmaker, shopkeepers, innkeepers, butchers, a plasterer, a blacksmith, a wheelwright, a market gardener and a carrier. St James was annexed to Pucklechurch

5. The Church Building

	Building Structures	*Significance
Tower	The 3-stage tower is the finest feature of St James, tall and slim, Perpendicular in style, with a chequerboard appearance from the high number of facing stones placed irregularly over its surface. The tower is topped by a pierced embattled parapet, and seven other slim crocketed pinnacles. The tower was built in C15 and restored by the Roberts family, the Lords of the Manor, in the seventeenth century.	Mod-high
North door and porch	The Nave, north wall, doorway and ancient window are 12th century. It was largely re-built in C15 when the south aisle, porch and tower were added. The two carved heads were disfigured at the Reformation.	Mod-high
Nave	The ribbed wooden ceiling is typical of this locality, resembling an upturned boat (Latin "navis"). The three sections nearest the tower are all that survived the fire of 1863.	Moderate
Chancel	The Chancel (latin: "cancelli") is plain but in good condition. It includes altar, sedilia, choir stalls and priests stall. Chancel repairs fall to the Church Commissioners..	Moderate

Entrance	The panelled entrance installed by William Prigge and Thomas Rudge, churchwardens in 1638	Moderate
Gallery	The Minstrels Gallery was erected above the panelled entrance in 1771.	Moderate
Pillars & Squint	The octagonal pillars and arches were put in during the C15 extension. The large squint in the south respond of chancel arch allows worshippers in the south aisle to glimpse of the altar.	Low-M
Windows	A C13 lancet window remains to the east of the porch. The large window by the pulpit is C15 and Perpendicular work, with square head and panelled tracery. In this tracery is preserved the only remaining fragments of medieval stained glass to have survived. A painted panel by Michel Lassen was donated by Joan Derrick, a local singer to commemorate the 700th anniversary.	Low-M
Bells	In the bell frame are mounted 6 bells, 2 of them ancient; the tenor weighs 20cwt and inscribed "The gift of John Astry, Esq., 1702". Today rung for Sunday services, weddings, special festivals and practice nights.	Moderate
Bell openings	The three bell openings in the tower and the west window are typical of the period. The louvers were installed in 2007 to keep out the crows and new lighting installed for the bell chamber in 2009	Low-M
Heating	The church is warmed by 27 x 500W under-pew heaters on a time-switch. It is lit by 3 ancient chandeliers in the nave and LED uplighters in the South Aisle	

6. Contents of the Church

	Functional components	*Significance
Font	Probably Norman, possible C17, but certainly an odd design with a square decorated bowl on a scalloped base standing on a fat circular column.	Moderate
Pulpit	The fine stone pulpit with its elegant goblet shape, is a C15 work.	Moderate
Sedilia	In the sanctuary is a rather stark example of stone sedilia, although it has some lovely carvings.	Moderate
Organ	The organ was built by J.G.Haskins and sons in 1910. It has some 90 pipes.	Low-M
Clock	The magnificent clock on the north face of the tower was restored in 1999	Low-M
Choir stalls	The choir stalls were restored in 1906. The single stall is used by the minister leading worship.	Low
Altar	The wooden has a marble front depicting Jesus Christ as the lamb carrying his cross.	Low
Pews	The pews in the Nave and in the South Aisle were installed in the 1860's.	Low
Lecturn	Wooden: donated in 1920s by Emma Stevens, sister of incumbent in memory of Hermione Goodrick.	Low
Oak table	The oak table in the South Aisle probably replaced the stone altar after the Reformation.	Low
Roof slates	Replaced in summer 2012 in English Heritage project	

	Ornaments	*Significance
Royal Arms	An extraordinary large work of 1755, restored in 2004. Required to be displayed in parish churches from Henry VIII's reign until C19. The little lion at the top is possibly a caricature of George II.	Moderate
Memorials	The vestry (formerly the Roberts chapel) holds C17 memorials to members of the Roberts family. Richard Hollister is also commemorated by a Latin inscription.	Low-M
Brasses	The brass plates and stone tables placed in the floor. These commemorate men and women who died in the C17. Three more on the wall at the west end are from C18.	Low-M
1863 Map	The 1863 map defines the ownership of land in the parish of Westerleigh.	Low-M
Benefactors	Two boards commemorate welfare benefactors of 1679, 1686, 1702 and 1715.	Low-M
Roll of Honour	Displays the names of Westerleigh residents who gave their lives in the Great War.	Low

*Significance	Key
High	Important at national to international levels
Moderate-high	Important at regional or sometimes higher
Moderate	Usually of local value but of regional significance for group or other value
Low-moderate	Of local value
Low	Adds little or nothing to the value of a site or detracts from it

7. Significance for mission

St James' church adjoins the village green. The Friends of St James Westerleigh was formed in 2010 to restore the roof and encourage much better use of the building as a resource for residents, congregation and visitors for meetings, events, concerts and other social activities for the village and surroundings [Low-moderate].

8. References

Description	Source
Westerleigh village history	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westerleigh
Building description	Quinquennial Inspection Report 2014 by T. Blatchford of Stone Architectural
Building construction	English Heritage architect report Dec 2010
Church contents	Pamphlet by Rev David Wilcox, updated Rev Chris Verey
Building description by Church Crawler	http://www.churchcrawler.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/chcrawler/wstrlgh.htm
Graveyard inscriptions	"Memorial inscriptions recorded by Sodbury Vale (S.Glos) Family History Group" 1997

Patrick Mills, Churchwarden 20 August 2011/updated May 2015



St James Westerleigh, view down onto churchyard

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St James Westerleigh from North June 2010



The north face of the tower June 2010



St James, Westerleigh from South East August 2011



St James, Westerleigh Interior August 2011