

CASTLERING ARCHAEOLOGY

REPORT NO. 677

VESTRY REFLOORNG AT
ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

TONG

SHROPSHIRE

SJ 7957 0739

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

DECEMBER 2018

SYNOPSIS

This report contains the results of archaeological monitoring and recording conducted during ground disturbing works undertaken in association with the reflooring of the Vestry at St Bartholomew's Church, Tong, Shropshire. The Church receives statutory protection as a Grade I Listed Building of c.1260 origins, largely re-built c.1410. The PCC had advised that the present Vestry floor was laid during the 1891-92 refurbishment of the church.

Within the centre of the Vestry floor a rectangular brass plaque affixed to a stone slab recorded the burial of Archdeacon Buckeridge and his family, believed to lie in a vault below the floor. Rev. Charles Buckeridge was the Minister of Tong Parish for sixteen years, from 1791 to 1807. He died in 1827 and, although his death preceded the 1891-92 refurbishment work, no documentation had come to light concerning the form or nature of the burial.

In August 2017, an archaeological watching brief was conducted during ground disturbing works in association with improvements to drainage adjacent to the northeast side of the Church. The works included investigating the possibility of an external entrance into the Buckeridge tomb. No evidence of an entrance was exposed and in the same month, a ground probing radar survey was undertaken of the floor area of the Vestry which confirmed the presence of the tomb. It was estimated that the feature was 300mm below the floor level and the new floor construction was designed to ensure that the vault would not be impacted on.

The watching brief was conducted on December 5th and 6th 2018, while the concrete screed floor was broken up and hand excavation was undertaken to reach the required depth for the construction of the new floor. The Buckeridge memorial brass plaque and stone slab were removed and set aside for reinstatement. Overall the removal of the floor exposed a soft red sand layer mixed with fragments of brick and speckled with mortar. Further excavation towards the centre of the room exposed the raised eastern arch of the tomb and the top of the vault, which extended east as far as the foundations of the east wall. The location of the top of the tomb at 300mm below the east wall sill level ensures that the proposed new floor can be constructed according to plan, with no impact on the tomb.

An area of the vaulted surface was hand cleaned to allow for some recording; however it was not within the remit of the project to make a full investigation of the tomb. The structure measured 2.2m on an east-west alignment, constructed in hard-fired red bricks measuring a regular 240 x 70 x 60mm and laid with a medium hard lime mortar. Eight full bricks formed the length of the body of the tomb and the vaulted section extended for approximately 1.1m in width.

No further ground reductions were required and the tomb was left intact.

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Abbreviations:

<i>c.</i>	<i>circa</i>
HE	Historic England
HER	Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
m	metre
mm	millimetre
PCC	Parochial Church Council

Castling Archaeology was established in 1998 to offer
Independent Archaeological and Heritage Services

Every effort has been made to provide accurate information within this report. However Castling Archaeology cannot be held responsible for any third party errors and inaccuracies contained therein.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report contains the results of archaeological monitoring and recording conducted during ground disturbing works undertaken in association with the reflooring of the Vestry at St Bartholomew's Church, Tong, Shropshire. The church has been awarded HLF GFPOW funding for repairs and the re-ordering and upgrading of the Vestry, to provide a useful meeting space for both the community and church activities.

Statutory Status

1.2 The Church receives statutory protection as a Grade I Listed Building (Historic England List No. 1053606). The Church and Churchyard form Shropshire Historic Environment Record No. 13882. The Listed Building description and Shropshire Historic Environment Record list St Bartholomew's as a Parish Church of c.1260, largely re-built c.1410 for Lady Elizabeth de Pembruge, with a South Chapel added c. 1515. The body of the Church comprises a 3-bay Nave with 4-bay aisles extending eastwards to form transepts; a central 3-staged Tower with spire; a South Transept Chapel; a 3-bay Chancel, and a North Vestry, as recorded in Fig. 1 *overleaf*. The Church, which is constructed in ashlar below lead roofs, was restored 1889 – 92, by the then Diocesan architect Ewan Christian.

Programme of works

1.3 The PCC had advised that the present floor was laid during the 1891-92 refurbishment and appeared to be a composite mix of compacted dry lime mortar, sand and ash in the form of a screed on which a herring bone pattern parquet floor was laid. It is understood that due to the rising damp, the parquet floor was attacked by rot and was removed some 30+ years ago, leaving only the screed. Discrete investigation, in the form of pilot holes drilled in the slab in four locations relative to the corners of the room, had identified that the slab was approximately 100mm to 120mm thick laid directly on earth.

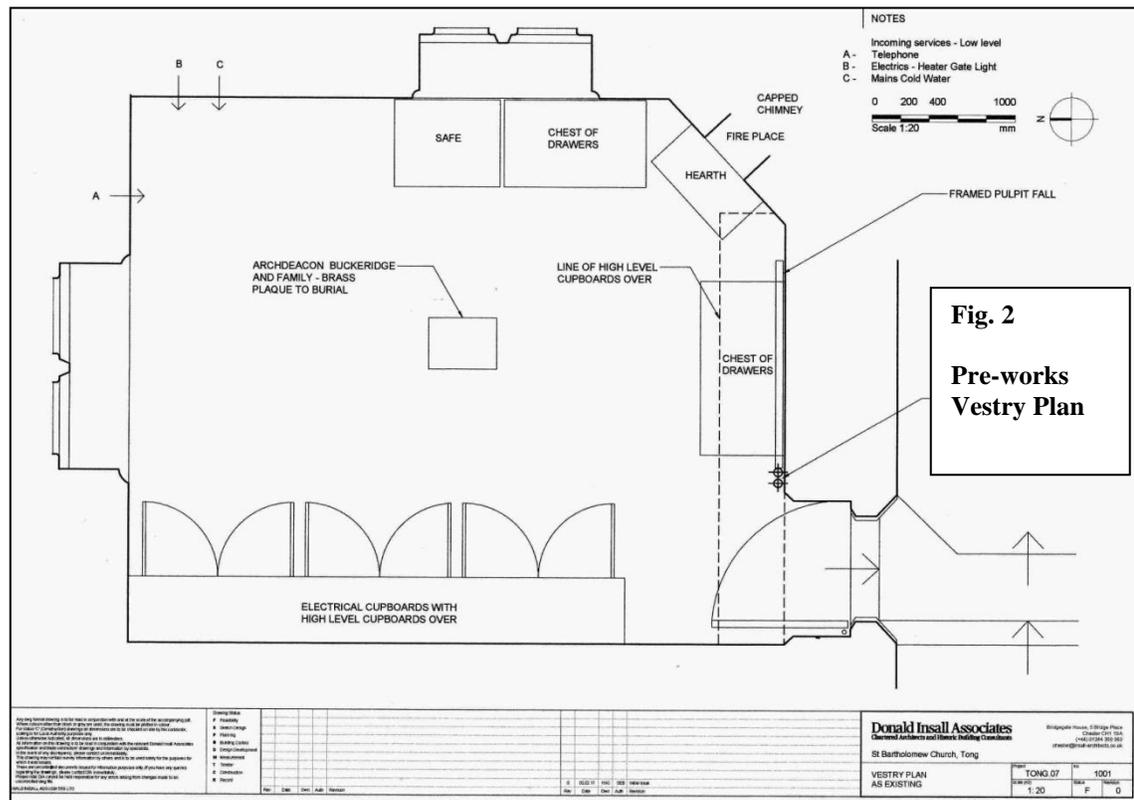
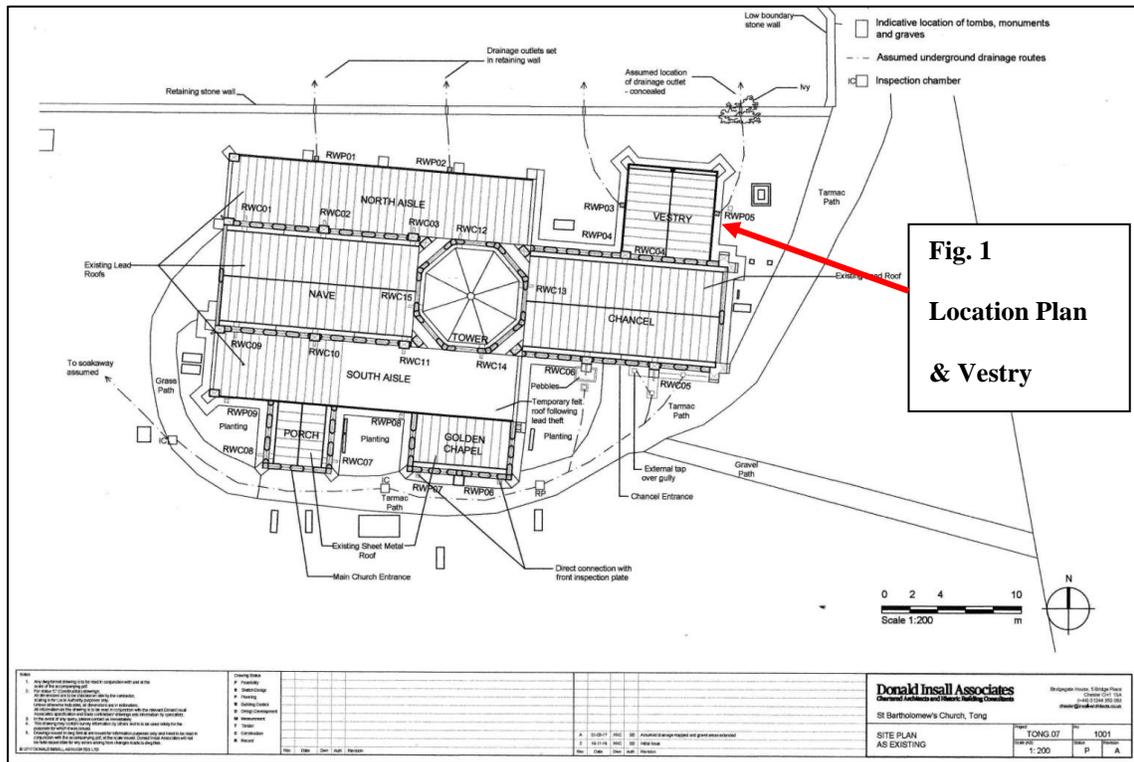
1.4 The current programme comprised the removal of the existing screed floor and hand excavation sufficient to allow for the introduction of a new floor system within the Vestry.

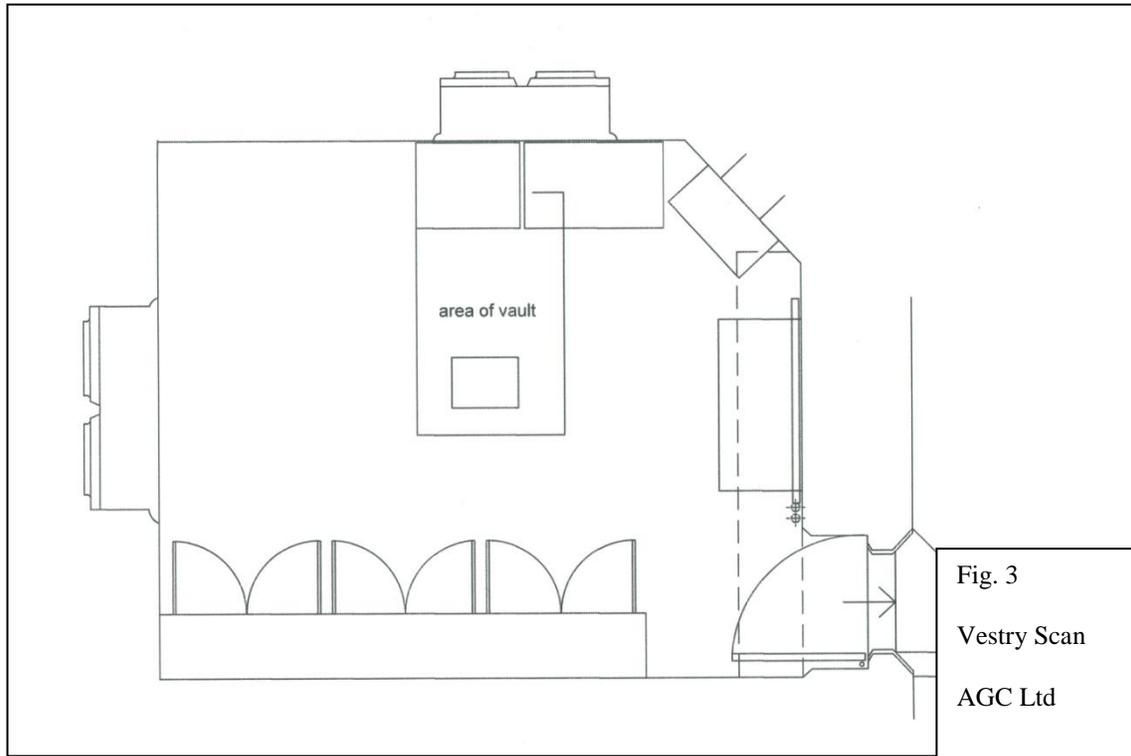
The Buckeridge Tomb

1.5 Within the centre of the Vestry floor a rectangular brass plaque affixed to a stone slab recorded the burial of Archdeacon Buckeridge and his family, believed to lie in a vault below the floor (Plate 1 *overleaf*). Rev. Charles Buckeridge was the Minister of Tong Parish for sixteen years, from 1791 to 1807, before he became Archdeacon of Coventry and a Canon of the Cathedral Church of Lichfield. He died aged 72 on 28th September 1827. Although his death preceded the 1891-92 refurbishment work, which is believed to have included the laying of the present Vestry floor, no documentation had come to light to confirm the form or nature of the burial.

1.6 In August 2017, Castlering Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief during ground disturbing works undertaken in association with improvements to drainage adjacent to the northeast side of St Bartholomew's Church. The works included investigating the possibility of an external entrance into the Buckeridge tomb. No evidence of an entrance was exposed and in the same month, a ground probing radar survey was undertaken of the floor area of the Vestry by AGC Ltd. in order to confirm the presence of the tomb. The data collected indicated a domed vault extended over an area 1.25m x 1.1m at 300mm below the present floor level, as recorded on Fig. 3 *following*. It was estimated that the total depth of the feature was 1.2 metres below surface level.

1.7 Following the 2017 site investigations, the new floor construction was designed to ensure that the vault would not be impacted on.





2. AIMS

The aims of the archaeological monitoring are to:

- ensure the said works are carried out to the satisfaction of Historic England and the Diocesan Advisory Committee;
- ensure all those involved in the implementation of the works are aware of the significance of the Grade I Listed building and that no excavation is undertaken without the presence of an archaeologist;
- secure the preservation by record of any archaeological remains or artefacts that are encountered during the said works;
- secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site;
- produce a final report documenting the results of the watching brief.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The archaeological contract was undertaken within the Guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA); in particular the following:

- *Code of Conduct* (CIfA, 2014a)
- *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA, 2014b)
- *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology* (CIfA 2014c).

3.2 All stages of the project were carried out in accordance with the guidelines contained in:

- Historic England, 2015a, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*. (Online <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/.../morphe-project-managers-guide>).

3.3 The sitework comprised the monitoring of all groundworks associated with the removal of the existing screed floor and excavations as necessary, undertaken by Grosvenor Construction Limited as directed by Donald Insall Associates.

4. SITEWORK

4.1 The sitework was undertaken on December 5th and 6th 2018 while the existing concrete floor was broken up and hand excavation was undertaken to reach the required depth for the construction of the new floor. The Buckeridge memorial brass plaque and stone slab were removed and set aside for reinstatement.

4.2 Overall the removal of the floor exposed a soft red sand layer mixed with fragments of brick and speckled with mortar, confirming the belief that the composite screed floor lay above natural sands. Further excavation towards the centre of the room exposed the raised eastern arch of the tomb, constructed in a single course of 13 bricks. The arch measured 240mm wide (single brick width) and extended for 1.1m, which appears to be the width of the tomb. Beyond this length, the arch dipped and appeared to rest on the side walls.

4.4 The top of the tomb extended east as far as the foundation plinth of the east wall. The location of the top of the tomb at 300mm below the east wall sill level ensures that the proposed new floor can be constructed according to plan, with no impact on the tomb.

4.5 An area of the surface of the vault was hand cleaned to allow for some recording, although it was not within the remit of the project to make a full investigation of the tomb. The structure measured 2.2m on an east-west alignment. The tomb was constructed in hard-fired red bricks measuring a regular 240 x 70 x 60mm and laid with a medium hard lime mortar. Eight full bricks formed the length of the body of the tomb and the vaulted section extends for approximately 1.1m in width.

4.6 No further excavation was required and the tomb has been left intact.



Plate 2: Breaking up the concrete floor



Plate 3:
Depth of excavation below door level

Plate 4:
Initial exposure of the arch





Plate 5: Tomb occupying central position with the Vestry, viewed from the north



Plate 6: Tomb, viewed from the west

5. CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief has ensured that:

- a photographic record has been made to verify the existence and form of the Buckeridge tomb;
- the works undertaken have been carried out to the satisfaction of Historic England and the Diocesan Advisory Committee;
- the recent below ground works have had no impact on the structure of the tomb.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Castling Archaeology would like to thank Donald Insall Associates, for contracting the archaeological work on behalf of St Bartholomew's PCC, and Grosvenor Construction Limited for their full co-operation on site.

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HER No. 13882 Grade I Listed Church Of St Bartholomew, Newport Road, Tong

Historic England List No. 1053606

Parish Church built c.1260, largely re-built c. 1410, for Elizabeth de Pembruge, South Chapel of c. 1515, and whole restored 1889 - 92 by Ewan Christian. Ashlar with lead roofs. 3 bay nave, 4 bay aisles extending Eastwards to form transepts, central tower and spire, South transept chapel, 3 bay chancel, and North vestry.

Church was largely re-built after the founding of a chantry college here in 1410 by Elizabeth de Pembruge; none of the collegiate buildings survive but the remains of almshouses still stand to the West.