

# CASTLERING ARCHAEOLOGY

REPORT NO. 712

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## RE-ORDERING WITHIN ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

TONG

SHROPSHIRE

SJ 7957 0739

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

JULY 2020

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**SYNOPSIS**

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This report contains the results of archaeological monitoring and recording conducted during ground disturbing works undertaken as part of re-ordering within St Bartholomew's Church, Tong, Shropshire. The Church of St Bartholomew receives statutory protection as a Grade I Listed Building and the presence of an archaeologist during works on site was proposed in order to achieve a Faculty approval.

The re-ordering works included the relocation of the Humphrey Vernon tomb and the removal of 2 pews in order to achieve an improved level of storage. The removal of the pews revealed a concrete screed floor with no further ground reduction required. The Vernon tomb proved to be constructed in re-used stone with only the top inscribed alabaster slab being of any interest. The top memorial slab was worn but two incised effigies were still evident (Humphrey and Alice Vernon) and the slab will be restored as part of the current programme of work. The chest was empty, as anticipated, and set upon a screed floor. The general opinion is that the memorial slab was re-sited as a tomb against the north wall during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration work.

No further ground disturbance was required as part of the current programme of work.

The monitoring has ensured that the works were carried out to the satisfaction of Historic England and the Diocesan Advisory Committee and have had no negative impact on the archaeological resource.

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 errors and inaccuracies contained therein.

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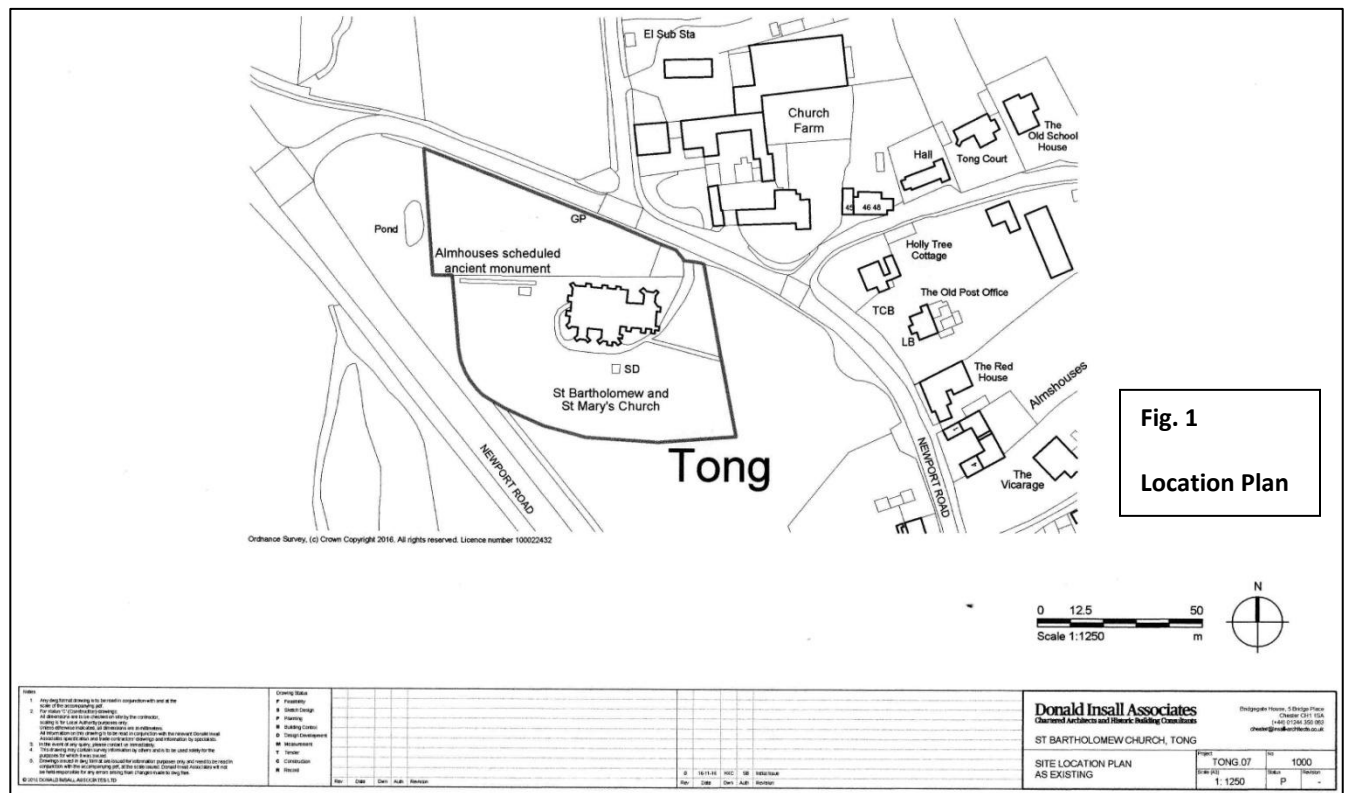
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**Abbreviations:**

<i>c.</i>	<i>circa</i>
HER	Historic Environment Record
CifA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
m	metre
MCIFA	Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
NHLE	National Heritage List Entry

1. INTRODUCTION

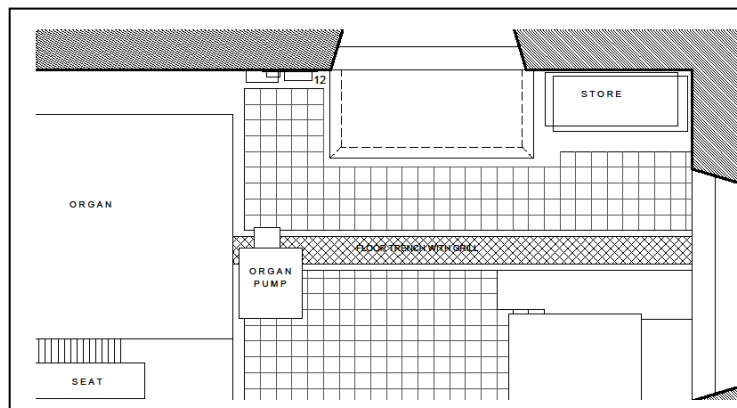
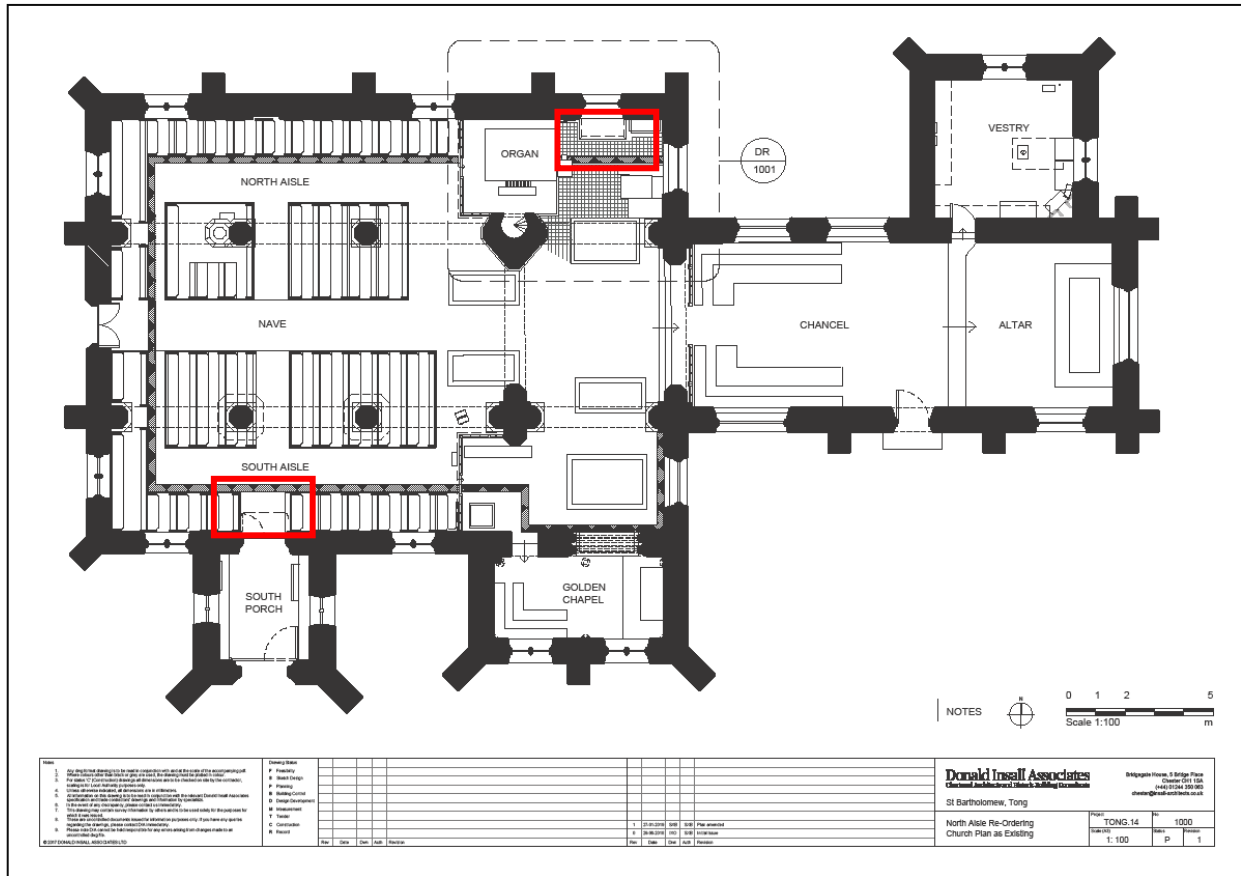
1.1 This report contains the results of archaeological monitoring and recording conducted during ground disturbing works undertaken as part of re-ordering within St Bartholomew’s Church, Tong, Shropshire. The Church of St Bartholomew receives statutory protect as a Grade I Listed Building (Historic England List No. 1053606) and the presence of an archaeologist during works on site was proposed in order to achieve a Faculty approval.



1.2 The re-ordering works included the removal of 2 pews and the relocation of the Humphrey Vernon tomb in order to achieve an improved level of storage. The Humphrey Vernon tomb is one of seven located at the east end of the nave under the crossing within the transept (Fig. 2 overleaf).

1.3 In May 2019, a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared at the request of Donald Insall Associates, acting on behalf of the PCC, to outline the appropriate archaeological monitoring and recording to be maintained during the proposed re-ordering.

1.4 Following Faculty approval, the works were carried out in July 2020.



**Fig. 2 above:**  
 Location of Vernon Tomb and pews to be removed.

**Fig. 3 left:**  
 Vernon Tomb

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## 2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

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2.1 Documentary research undertaken by Donald Insall Associates has led to the conclusion that the Vernon tomb is not sited in its original position, based on the following observations and information:

- the incised alabaster slab has a profiled edge detail to the south and west sides with an inscription engraved along the edge of the east end, suggesting the tomb was originally set away from the wall;
- comments from the Church Monument Society stating that there is doubt that the Vernon tomb chest is either in-situ or original to the 16th century construction;
- a church plan dating between c.1877 and the 1892 restoration records of the Walker organ located to the head of the north aisle in 1877. J W Walker and Sons Ltd note that the organ was taken down, cleaned, and moved, presumably to its present position, a little further to the west behind the tower stair, as part of the 1892 restoration work. It may be at this date that the Humphrey tomb was moved to the external wall to provide space for the new musical instrument. The tomb is now completely blocked in by the Walker organ;
- the results of a Ground Penetrating Radar survey.

2.2 The Ground Probing Radar survey of the floor area and tomb in the east end of the North Aisle was undertaken by AGC Ltd. in 2018 to try to locate any buried features beneath the surface floor level which may have existed under the stone plaques and to examine the above ground tomb of Humphrey Vernon. Any features beneath the stone plaques in the floor gave very weak reflections and could not be distinguished from the surrounding soils. The survey did not identify any voiding within the interior of the tomb or any lead lining and the tomb showed a symmetrical pattern down to the ground while scanning along the top.

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## 3. AIMS & METHODOLOGY OF THE MONITORING WORK

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3.1 The aims of the archaeological monitoring were 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 to ensure the careful dismantling of the Vernon tomb;
- secure the preservation by record of works on site and any archaeological features / artefacts that are encountered during the said works;
- produce a final report documenting the results of the archaeological monitoring.

3.2 The archaeological contract was undertaken following guidance laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists; English Heritage and the Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists.

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#### 4. MONITORING WORK

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4.1 Site monitoring was undertaken during the dismantling of the Humphrey Vernon tomb and the removal of pews to either side of the church doorway.

4.2 The tomb stood to a height of 0.95m above floor level, against the north wall of the church (Plate 1 *following*). It was already clear that the tomb was not sited in its original position and the materials beneath the incised slab were not original to its 16<sup>th</sup> century construction.

4.3 The alabaster slab measured 1.6m long by 0.7m wide. Although worn, the inscription could be identified as that of Humphrey Vernon and his wife Alice. Humphrey died on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1531 and his wife shortly after (Plate 3). The incised slab has a profiled edge detail on the south and west sides, with an inscription engraved along the edge of the east end (as noted in situ). This suggests that the tomb was originally set away from the wall and concurs with other opinions that the slab was designed to be on a tomb chest. If so, there is no record of where the original chest tomb was sited or when it was dismantled.

4.4 The tomb was methodically dismantled revealing a mix of building materials, which one can only assume were sourced on site in the past. The large limestone slab that fronted the tomb was un-inscribed and roughly hewn on the inside. The side walls were formed by sizeable blocks of stone, also rough on the inside, and gaps in the stonework were infilled with brick. It was clear that none of this material was cut especially to build the chest tomb.

4.5 The dismantling work affirmed the accepted theory that the memorial slab was re-sited as a piecemeal chest tomb against the wall during late 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration work. At this date it is believed that it was repaired and re-erected in its current position parallel with and adjacent to the other tombs of the Vernon family. The tomb sat on a screed floor, surrounded by the red tiled floor of the north aisle.

4.6 Other re-ordering work included the removal of two pews to either side of the south door. These also revealed a screed base, surrounded by the red tiled floor.



**Plate 1:**  
**Humphrey Vernon**  
**tomb, prior to**  
**works**



**Plate 2:**  
**Incised alabaster**  
**memorial slab**  
**depicting, in black**  
**lines, Humphrey**  
**Vernon, dressed in**  
**Tudor armour, and**  
**his wife, Alice.**





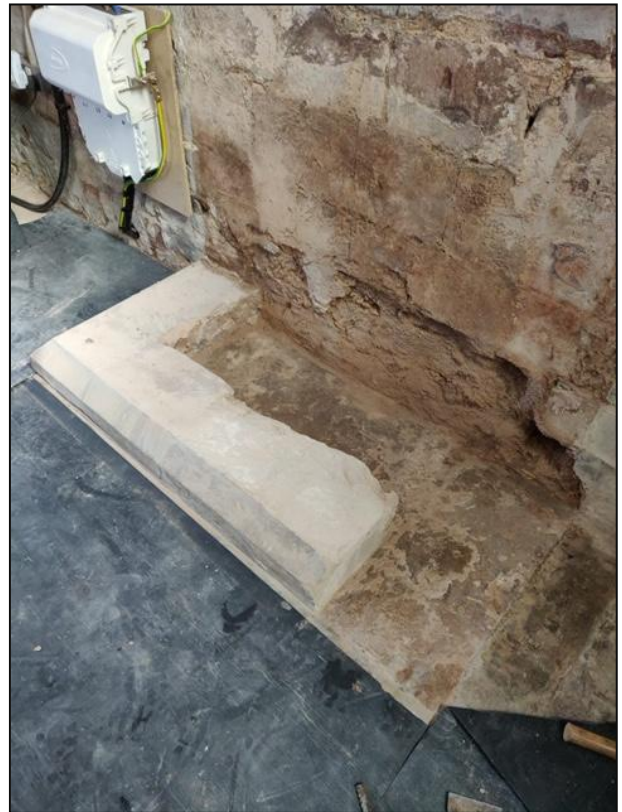
**Plate 3:**  
**Front slab**



**Plate 4:**  
**Following removal of the top slab**



**Plates 5-7:**  
**Gradual process of dismantling**



**Plates 8-11: Kerbed base and screed floor**





**Plates 12-13:**

**The un-inscribed front slab**



**Plates 14:**

**Screed floor below pews**

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## 5. CONCLUSIONS

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5.1 The results of monitoring during the dismantling of the tomb concurred with the widely held theory that it had been re-sited in this position during late 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration work. The careful dismantling revealed the re-used building materials and the slightly crude nature of construction.

5.2 The tomb was a very simple structure compared to the other Vernon family tombs in the church. Other than the top slab, the building materials were of no historic interest as their exact source could not be identified. The incised memorial slab is however of historic and artistic value and its conservation and retention in a suitable position where it can be better displayed to the public is welcomed.

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## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Castlering Archaeology would like to thank Donald Insall Associates, for contracting the archaeological work on behalf of St Bartholomew's PCC, and the Reverend P. Thorneycroft. Thanks are also due to the restoration team of Treasure & Son, and particular Toni Basso, for their full co-operation on site.

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## 7. GENERAL GUIDANCE

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AGC Ltd., 2018, *Report on a Ground Probing Radar Survey of the Humphrey Vernon Tomb and Possible Subsurface Floor Features at St. Bartholomew's Church, Tong*. Report Agc480/18, August 2018

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### **Historic England / Shropshire Historic Environment Record**

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.