

CHURCH OF ANDREW, CHURCH STREET, CHEDDAR, SOMERSET BS27 3RF

Report on the Potential Impact of Proposed Reordering Works on the Archaeological Significance of the Church

To be read in conjunction with Communion Architects Drawings
E.10 Existing Floor Plan & **P.23** Proposed Floor Plan (Revised 23/5/23)



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The PCC of the Church of St Andrew, Cheddar

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The photograph on the cover shows pre-Reformation Bench Ends in the South Aisle.

CHURCH OF ST ANDREW, CHEDDAR, SOMERSET

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Summary

The proposed reordering works include the installation of WC's, Served, potential pew removal to create a hospitality area and a new Eco Heating system.

The writer of this document was commissioned by the PCC after consultation with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) to undertake a site visit and visually inspect the areas of the proposed works and assess the potential impact on the Archaeological Significance of the church and below ground deposits.

The subsequent inspection was carried out was on Wednesday the 26th of June 2024 under dry sunny conditions.

Location

The site is located at NGR ST 4596 5301 Church Street, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3RF.

Project Background

The proposals were discussed at the DAC's (Diocese of Bath and Wells) May meeting and feedback received advised that the parish needs to be reminded to reference the archaeological importance of the church and the context of the church in relation to Cheddar. Also that the proposed scheme will have an impact on the archaeological significance and potential of the church. And therefore an archaeological impact assessment is needed as part of the next phase of the development plan (DAC Secretary 2024).

The Somerset Historic Environment Record (SHER) held by South West Heritage Trust (SWHT) was consulted to locate any known monuments or fieldwork within the church and its environs.

Archaeological Background

The Church is Grade I Listed, list entry number 1173613 (Historic England 2024), It is recorded as a GI Parish church. Coursed and squared rubble, lead roofs, coped verges. C14, C15, restored in 1873 by William Butterfield. Nave with clerestory, short chancel clasped by large north and south chapels, north and south aisles, the latter with a further chapel and porch, north porch, tall west tower. Predominantly Perpendicular, some Decorated features. Three stage tower with diagonally connected set-back buttresses ascending to shafts and pinnacles; parapet pierced with quatrefoils, stair turret with a pinnacle; triple two-light bell-chamber windows to third stage, that to centre louvred,

those flanking blank; large four-light west window above a door, above two figures of the Annunciation in niches; interior of the tower with a lierne vault. Further similar pierced parapets to nave, aisles, and chancel, with pinnacles.

Decorated two-light clerestory windows, three-light Perpendicular aisle windows, further large Perpendicular windows to chapels east window of the restoration. Interior with C14 aisles of five- and one-half bays, further C14 arches to north and south chapels; later elaborate panelled arch to south aisle chapel incorporating three figures in the respond; chancel arch of the restoration. C14 roofs to nave and north and south aisles with colouring and gilding by Butterfield, similar treatment to C19 wagon-roof to chancel. Painted C15 stone pulpit, chancel with restored C13 piscina. C19 parclose screens to north and south chapels probably incorporating earlier work. C15 carved bench ends, particularly in north aisle. Painting in south aisle chapel of C17 by Jan Erasmus Quellinus, Christ at Emains; this chapel also with some C15 stained glass; further C19 stained glass. Altar table of 1631, chest tomb in chancel to Sir Thomas Cheddar of 1442 with a brass, further brass to his lady of 1474 at its base; opposite the remains of a further chest tomb. Early C14 font with a C17 cover. Large paintings of 1810 under tower, time and death, previously flanked chancel arch, probably moved at the time of the restoration. C17 chest. Peal of eight bells, earliest probably pro-Reformation. Some C19 wall monuments.

The SHER Record No: 10410, Church of St Andrew and Churchyard (SWHT 2024) records the church as being: - Decorated and Perpendicular. There is C13 double bowled piscina in the chancel and another in the S aisle. In normal use. Graveyard in use since at least medieval times. The present building (except for the C13 chancel) was built between 1350-1450 and is probably the 4th church on the site. The tower has many reused Roman bricks. The church was restored in 1873 by William Butterfield.

The collapse of part of the ceiling was used as an opportunity to take samples for dendrochronology. Samples were taken from the wall plates but despite matching each other well, they could not be matched to any reference sequence and so remain undated.

There is a three panelled wooden memorial board to the fallen of the First World War. The border of the memorial consists of oak leaves and acorns. The Coat of Arms of the Cheddar family is depicted at the top centre. There are several memorials to servicemen. An addition to a gravestone on the churchyard records Sgt H C Cullen MSM RE who died in 1918. Another addition to a gravestone commemorates C H Collard, Canadian Infantry, who died in 1916. A Stone of Remembrance commemorates PO W E Domaille RAF who died in 1942. Almost certainly a minster.

Further dendro-chronological work, including ceiling boards, was again consistent with itself and the earlier work at Cheddar but failed to match any other known chronologies. An inscription on the post of the 5th truss from the W recorded building work to the roof in 1757 and another recorded repairs and chemical treatment in 1948-50 at which time the sapwood may have been hacked from the timber. Probably a minster, part of a system set up by King Ine (688-725).

SHER Record No: 11441 records Roman, Saxon and medieval occupation at the Vicarage and Roman remains within the churchyard. Roman remains found at various dates in the Vicarage Garden, the churchyard and the field adjoining. The finds include

scraps of tessellated pavement, Samian, "cinerary urns", objects of bronze and coins. 15 were found in the garden, 7 in the field called Parsonage Pen and one in the churchyard. Human remains and coins were found in June 1894 when excavating for the new parish room near the Vicarage (at ST45955306).

The churchyard is also bounded on its west and south sides and southeast corner by a Scheduled Monument which includes the Roman settlement site, Anglo Saxon and Norman royal place and St Columbanus Chapel, list entry 1017290.

A watching brief undertaken in 2002 at Church Farm during the construction of a conservatory and garage uncovered a Roman occupation layer and possible graves associated with a larger medieval churchyard, although it is not impossible that they were Roman, SHER Record No: 15371.

The only fieldwork recorded as being undertaken within the church and churchyard is a watching brief in 1990 which monitored the excavation of a French drain along the north wall of the church, and this uncovered a number of burials close to the existing ground level and the rubble foundations for the eastern buttress along the wall, SHER Record No: 12255.

Methodology

The main excavation work for the project is likely to be the installation of drainage for the new WC`s and Servedy. The proposed external route (Fig. 1) was walked and visually inspected for any obvious above ground features that are likely to be impacted by the service trench excavation.

The installation of the new WC`s, Servedy and creation of a hospitality area requires the removal of the remaining pews in the south aisle and the shortening by up to 800mm of the south ends of the opposite pews in the nave. The proposals also include the removal of some pews in the north aisle and the creation of a new stage at the east end of the nave.

Installation of the new Eco Heating System will involve replacing the existing pipework and it is envisaged that it will follow the existing underfloor network. If required a new boiler will be sited in the same position as the existing one in the external boiler room on the south side of the tower and a new gas box in the compound to the south of the boiler room.

The affected areas were recorded by written descriptions; supplemented by a photographic record using digital photography and appropriate scales.

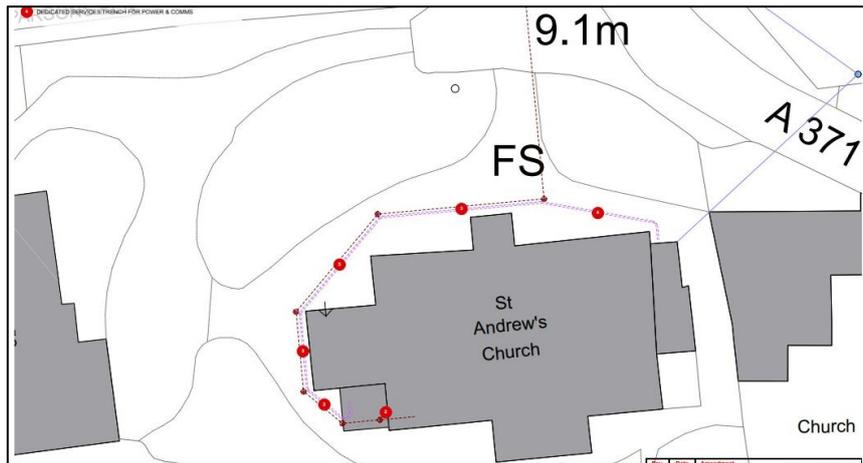


Figure 1. Proposed Service Trench Route (after Communion Architects)

Observations

- Service Trench Route

The proposed route runs from the external compound on the south side of the tower and will be excavated through existing access roads and footpaths around the west side of the Tower continuing around the north side of the church and eventually heading north to join existing service in the road (Figs 2 - 6). There are a series of concrete manhole covers already installed along this route and are assumed to relate to existing services of some form but there are no records of any archaeological monitoring works being carried out during this installation but may be associated with the drainage works undertaken in 1990.



Figure 2. Proposed Service Trench Route, SW corner of Church: facing NE



Figure 3. Proposed Service Trench Route, W side of Tower: facing E



Figure 4. Proposed Service Trench Route, N side of Church: facing SW



Figure 5. Proposed Service Trench Route, N side of Church: facing SE



Figure 6. Proposed Service Trench Route, N side of Church: facing N towards road

- New WC`s and Served in South Aisle

The installation of a single pod for hospitality and lavatory facilities and a free-standing served frontal will require the removal of the remaining pews in the south aisle and shortening the south ends of the opposite pews in the nave (Figs. 7 - 9).

The pews in this area are attached to wooden floorboards which are at the same level as the tiled (19th Century?) aisles. The pew benches would appear to be 19th Century or later with a mixture of contemporary and earlier bench ends (identified on architects drawing E10). The 19th Century ends appear to replicate the earlier ones and at least three different styles of carved blind tracery and floral spandrels were identified on the earlier ends during this visit (Figs. 10 - 12). The block of pews in the north aisle again appears to consist of later benches with mainly earlier ends. The bench ends in this area are more elaborately carved (Fig. 13) with some of the spandrels containing caricatures of human faces.

A loose floorboard was lifted at the west end of the south aisle during the visit, revealing existing pipework in a void up to 600mm deep (Fig. 14). Brick and stonework supporting walls were also visible under the timber flooring and a brickwork pad was visible under the west wall of the south aisle.



Figure 7. Pews in S aisle: facing W, 1m scale



Figure 8. S end of Nave pews: facing W



Figure 9. Pews in S aisle: facing E



Figure 10. Bench End in S aisle with elongated blind quatrefoil tracery: facing N, 1m scale



Figure 11. Bench End in S aisle with blind two cusped, flowing tracery: facing N



Figure 12. Bench End in S aisle with blind quatrefoil tracery: facing NE



Figure 13. Elaborately carved Bench Ends in N aisle: facing N



Figure 14. Existing pipework below the floor at W end of S aisle

- New Stage at the east end of the Nave

The proposals include the construction of a timber stage at the east end of the nave. There is no excavation associated with this feature as it will be seated on the existing floor. The area was carpeted during this visit so it was not possible to see the underlying flooring (Fig. 15), but it is assumed that it will be a continuation of the tiled and timber surfaces.



Figure 15. Proposed Stage Location at E end of Nave: facing S

Conclusion

The church is Grade I Listed and Historic England describe these buildings as being of exceptional interest as only 2.5% of listed buildings are grade I. This also means that the site is of exceptional national, architectural or historical importance.

Consultation of the SHER has shown that the church and its environs are located within an area of high archaeological potential and any excavation works associated with the proposals are likely to impact upon buried archaeological deposits.

Although the proposed route for the service trench follows existing paths and roadways Roman remains are recorded as being found within the churchyard and the watching brief in 1990 recorded shallow burials and foundations on the north side of the church therefore it is highly likely that similar deposits will be uncovered during these works. Any excavation work within the churchyard is also likely to uncover disarticulated human remains from the fills of numerous inter cutting graves and therefore these will need to be collected and reburied during the works.

Mr Tullett (Churchwarden) provided the writer of this document with an extract from the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) Record of Church Furnishings 2005 which records that the majority of the bench ends as being pre-Reformation and that some of the carved bench ends in the north aisle are 15th Century. The official listing also refers to 15th Century bench ends, especially in the north aisle. It was noted during these works that the bench ends in the south aisle generally alternate between old and new, with the newer ones appearing to be either 19th Century or later and not pre-Reformation.

The NADFAS survey contains detailed descriptions of the bench ends in the north aisle and it is thought that some of the carvings represent the vices of malicious speech and deceit. There would appear to be very little dating information on the rest of the earlier pews apart from them being labelled as pre-Reformation so some time before or during the 16th Century.

Extracts from the Weston Mercury and Somersetshire Herald describing the restoration of the church in 1873 (The Church as it was and is) was also provided by Mr Tullett and this describes that the box pews that had been filling the chancel and the aisles had now been removed and the chancel will now be appropriated to the use of the choristers and the whole of the old carved oak seat ends have been strictly preserved and utilised, and the inconvenient old benches and kneeling stools have been replaced by really comfortable seats and kneeling rails – the latter however, constructed to be most uncomfortable for the slovenly worshipper. The article does not mention if any of the ends were put back in their original positions but the alternate placing of the ends in the south aisle with old and new would suggest that they had been positioned for decorative effect rather than function.

If consent is given for the removal of pews in the north and south aisles, then careful consideration should be given to how these are going to be dismantled to protect the earlier ends from damage as these are of local, regional and national significance and should be treated as individual artefacts that may also require conservation work to help preserve them. Removal of the ends may reveal more information on their dating, and possibly present an opportunity for appropriate specialists to catalogue the different styles and carved detail.

The current proposals are for the ends to be fixed to the church walls, and again careful consideration should be given to how this is going to be achieved without causing any damage to the ends and church fabric. The proposals also include the removal of single pews in other areas of the church, and these should be treated in the same manner.

A further extract from the Weston Mercury and Somersetshire Herald records that the pavement of the nave and aisles was formerly composed of different kinds of stone – including freestone and blue lias – many of them bearing embellished crosses, without inscriptions, bespeaking burials of an earlier date. These, however, have been replaced with black, red and yellow Minton's tiles. This extract suggests that numerous ledger stones were removed and therefore there are likely to be many burials and vaults throughout the internal footprint of the church.

It is assumed that the wood flooring installed in the 19th Century is of a suspended construction to allow air flow for ventilation and service ducts for heating. This is partially backed up by the void containing pipework at the west end of the south aisle and a series of grills in the aisle inside the north entrance covering voids of between 400mm and 1.1m deep. The current proposals are for the wood flooring to be retained, and only small areas will be lifted for the installation of new pipework and no further excavation will be required. However no investigation work has taken place within the rest of the church to confirm how much of the floor area was excavated during the 19th Century reordering works. There is a strong possibility that any exposures below the existing floor may reveal earlier floor surfaces, earlier phases of the church's construction, burials and vaults.

The DAC's archaeological advisor is likely to recommend that archaeological monitoring is required as a condition of any faculty granted and carried out during any internal and external excavation work including removal of floorboards. A further requirement may be that a photographic and descriptive record is made prior to the removal of the pews and a similar record made once the floor coverings have been removed in the new stage area. The DAC may also require an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation to be produced and approved prior to the commencement of the works.

Acknowledgements

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Paul Tullett (Church Warden) is gratefully acknowledged for coordinating the works, providing copies of the architects drawings and other relevant paperwork and he is also thanked for his interest and assistance on site.

Bob Croft (County Archaeologist & DAC Archaeological Advisor) is also thanked for his advice.

Keith Faxon, July 2024

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