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WRINGTON
All Saints

VESTRY FLOOR OPTIONS

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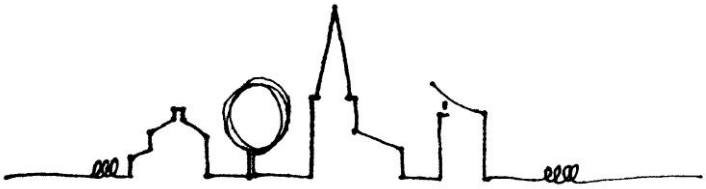
Project No 0104

28.02.25



This paper follows the recent discovery of beetle activity in the raised timber floor structure in the base of the west tower. This document sets out options for the PCC to consider in terms of managing this issue, particularly in the context of plans to install an accessible WC in this area in the near future.

Background

The base of tower is currently floored in timber with pine boards set on joists running north-south. The floor level is some 100mm above the adjacent nave floor level. Below this, a lower and earlier floor, where visible, is formed of lias flags and is lower than the current nave floor level by some 180mm. There is likely a substantial masonry step at the tower arch and potentially also at the base of the west doors, to manage the changes in level. In the C15 the west entrance would have functioned as a processional route into the church, possibly linked to former monastic activity located to the west of the church. The current churchyard is truncated in this area and there is little aspect to the west. The lack of wish or need to use the west doors is reflected in the changing uses of the base of the tower over the last few centuries. The area hosted the church organ for a number of years and when this was located to the north east chapel in the 19080's, the base of tower was fitted out as a substantial shared clergy and choir vestry, with high quality joinery designed by Alan Thomas, church architect.

It seems likely that the timber floor was installed to support the organ and raise it above the lias flags below to protect the instrument from damp. There are some more recent struts and supports within the timber floor structure which seem likely to date from the vestry joinery installation.

The beetle activity in the joists has only recently been discovered, but is likely to have developed slowly over a number of years. There is evidence of significant frass towards the north and south tower walls and it appears the joists sit on a timber bearer set against this wall rather than being built in. There are no obvious signs on the surface boards and the floor does not appear structurally defective or in danger of collapse in the short term. However, the integrity of the joists may be irrevocably compromised by the attack. The joists are likely C19 and not of particular significance. The base of towers are notoriously damp locations due to the depth of footings and the presence of chutes from the tower roof discharging directly into the ground.

Option 1 - Confirm extent of decay, repair/treat and monitor

The boards could be lifted and the timber joists analysed by inspection and if required, microdriling, to ascertain their structural integrity. The results will lead to proposals for localised treatment using methods such as boron, structural repairs or replacement of joists. Improvements to the end bearings may be required and a better detail could be developed to better protect against damp.

To thoroughly undertake this work, the vestry joinery would need to be removed and the boards lifted in their entirety to allow access to the structure.

It would be sensible to allow provision for monitoring the underfloor void in future as the base of tower masonry is likely to remain damp. Whilst we may be able to improve the ventilation and humidity, the area is likely to remain a risk for further/ ongoing beetle infestation.

A budget for the removal and subsequent reinstatement of vestry joinery might be in the region of £4-5k.

Additional consultant fees would include a structural engineer to inspect the exposed floor structure and design/detail repairs (say £1500k allowance)

Investigations and treatment/ repair of the timber floor – allow an additional £5-8k.

Our current fee proposal would remain unchanged as we have yet to write the schedule of works, but allow an additional 1-2 days of time whilst works are on site to inspect and agree the extent of works and to manage costs. Allow £650/ day.

Option 2 – Remove Timber Floor

As the timber floor is not of historic significance or of particular use, the floor structure could be entirely removed. This would remove the risk of further or ongoing decay in future.

In order to reinstate the vestry joinery and construct the new timber WC enclosure, a new solid insulated floor with underfloor heating could be installed to match the floor installed in the nave adjacent as part of the 2016 reordering.

The WC project currently requires a ramp to be installed to manage the 100mm change in level from the current nave. If a new floor was introduced in the tower and set at a height to match the nave this would not be necessary and a level threshold could be achieved for access to the new WC. We may consider some details to improve ventilation in and around the cabinetry when it is replaced to reduce exposure.

Area – approx. 23sqm say £300/sqm = £7-10k to include allowance for taking up lias flags to reduce levels.

Archaeological monitoring/ watching brief required with this option – say £1k budget

Budget for the removal and subsequent reinstatement of vestry joinery still required - in region of £4-5k.

An additional fee for required design work & detailing say 1-1.5 days, plus up to 1 day of additional site visits to supervise reduced dig, review lias flags etc. Allow £650/ day.

Conclusion

Although there will be extra costs associated with Option 2 this would appear the best option for protecting the vestry joinery (and new WC) from future beetle attack/ timber decay. It also allows a level threshold to be created which will improve the WC scheme.

End of document