

To: Jonathan Hetreed – Church Architect
Nick Burgess – Rexion Day Consulting Engineers
Colin Tremellen – Churchwarden
Pamela Pike – Churchwarden

On Tuesday 16 April 2019 Mr Patrick Stow from the DAC visited the Church to report on his findings following the core drilling. Mr Stow's report was subsequently presented to the DAC at their meeting on 15 May 2019.

I include a copy of the report in this email and confirm that the DAC would like to encourage the parish to continue to develop the proposal taking into account these findings and the advice given by the CBC.

Organised by Jonathan Hetreed Architects and attended by Nick Burgess of Rexion Day Consulting Engineers, the three hole locations were selected and work commenced with removal of a single stone in each location. Once carefully removed and set aside, the core of the wall could then be dry drilled approx. 900mm deep using a 75mm diamond tipped core drill.

When I arrived, the first of two top holes had been drilled and the second top stone was being removed. Inspection of the hole revealed dry conditions, a hole that had been relatively easy to drill as the stone appears to be Bath stone and quite soft. The rubble core fill was compact, competent and gave confidence in the apparently high quality employed in the tower construction.

On examination the group decided against drilling the second top hole as little additional information was expected to be discovered as sufficient reassurance had been gained with the results of the first hole.

The selection of the lower central stone set in the proposed doorway was made and work commenced to remove the selected stone. I withdrew from site for three hours to enable this work to be undertaken and returned to meet again with Mrs Jane Rees (Church Warden/Project Organiser) Nick Burgess (Consulting Engineer) and the two stonemasons from the Contractors, doing the drilling.

The bottom hole was limited in depth to approx. 600mm because the stonework was especially hard and the damp making the core drill labour and overheat because of the difficulties of the

high moisture content clogging the dust clearance and the particular hardness of the lower section stonework. Again the core matrix was found to be especially compact, unified, competent and entirely reassuring with minimal voids.

DRILLING OPERATION CONCLUSIONS:

The walling in the tower is built in two distinct phases. the lower section being an especially hard possibly local (Chilcompton?) stone roughly dressed and prone to damp issues at low level but entirely competent. The upper section in which the lintel zone is anticipated to reside is a much softer possibly a Bath stone, dry, competent and with a well filled core.

There is no structural objection to making a hole in this walling to create a doorway.

There is 'a but.'

Given the tower dimensions and an early interpretation by this writer of the original scheme proposal to put a new opening into the only fully blank wall of the tower at its base, and that there is an impressively heavy set of bells that are rung high up in this tower, then the writer's response had initially been one of great caution and reluctance structurally to adopt the scheme however this was to be further checked by the proposed core drilling of the masonry.

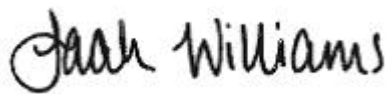
Having now seen the delightful, historic and original features of the church internal layout, the actual geometry of the tower which is different from that contained on the plans, the lack of a suitable alternative location for the proposed toilet and kitchen area and the lie of the ground externally, coupled with the investigation of the standard of construction of this tower, then the writer is now content with the notion of creating a doorway through this wall only to serve as the minimum access width required for disabled access to the proposed new facility to be located externally to the tower.

Two things arise from this observation/opinion.

a) The plans and faculty application need to reflect that the tower is actually very substantially built and braced by two perpendicular buttresses on each external corner and not a diagonal single buttress as shown on the initial scheme plans. Furthermore, the anticipated tower sway during bell ringing is reportedly not found to be happening, so the tower structure indeed seems very stiff and robust.

b) Notwithstanding the stiffness of the tower above, it would be advisable to make strenuous efforts to minimise the width of the new structural opening and so reduce the amount of historic fabric disturbance and potential weakening of the tower wall at its foot. With this in mind I would expect the structural scheme proposals to include careful design of the internal lintels, the position of the joinery for any door that is needed and consideration be given to uniting the internal and external leaves of masonry on either side of each door jamb now created. The Engineer understands the structural issues and will be designing the proposals accordingly.

Regards



Sarah Williams

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