

**CHURCH of St MICHAEL and ALL ANGELS,  
EAST COKER, YEOVIL, SOMERSET BA22 9JW**

**Report on the Archaeological Recording of minor opening  
up works on the internal tower walls for a structural  
assessment**



**Prepared July 2025 for  
The PCC of the Church of St Michael and All Angels, East Coker  
OASIS Ref No:2-535092**

**Carried out by:  
Keith Faxon.  
Archaeological Consultant,  
40 Shaftgate Avenue,  
Shepton Mallet,  
Somerset BA4 5YE.  
Telephone: 07790577189  
keithfaxon@hotmail.co.uk**

## CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY.....	2
LOCATION .....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	2
ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	3
METHODOLOGY.....	4
RESULTS.....	5
CONCLUSION.....	10
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	11
REFERENCES.....	12

### List of Figures

Figure 1. Proposed opening up works (after B2 Architects).....	3
Figure 2. Plaster removed on N Transept E wall: facing E, 1m & 2m scales .....	4
Figure 3. Plaster removed on Vestry wall: facing W .....	4
Figure 4. Exposed Stonework N Transept E wall: facing E, 0.5m divisions .....	5
Figure 5. Exposed Stonework in Vestry: facing NW, 0.5m divisions .....	6
Figure 6. Junction of N Transept wall and Tower Buttress: facing S, 0.5m divisions...	7
Figure 7. N Transept Parapet, constructed around Tower Buttress: facing E.....	7
Figure 8. N Transept wall butting N Aisle Buttress: facing SE .....	8
Figure 9. N Transept & N Aisle String Course detail: facing SE.....	8
Figure 10. Offset footings on N Transept wall: facing SE, 2m scale .....	9
Figure 11. Plan showing N Transept wall alignment (after B2 Architects).....	9

The photograph on the cover shows the church tower, viewed from the NE.

# CHURCH of St MICHAEL and ALL ANGELS, EAST COKER, SOMERSET

Archaeological Recording of minor opening up works on the internal tower walls for  
a structural assessment

## Summary

Archaeological recording of two small, exposed areas on the internal tower walls revealed slight variations in construction techniques. A visual inspection of the towers external north and west facing elevations would suggest that the lower sections of these elevations are all one phase therefore part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century rebuild.

## Location

The site is located at NGR ST 5388 1219 East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9JW.

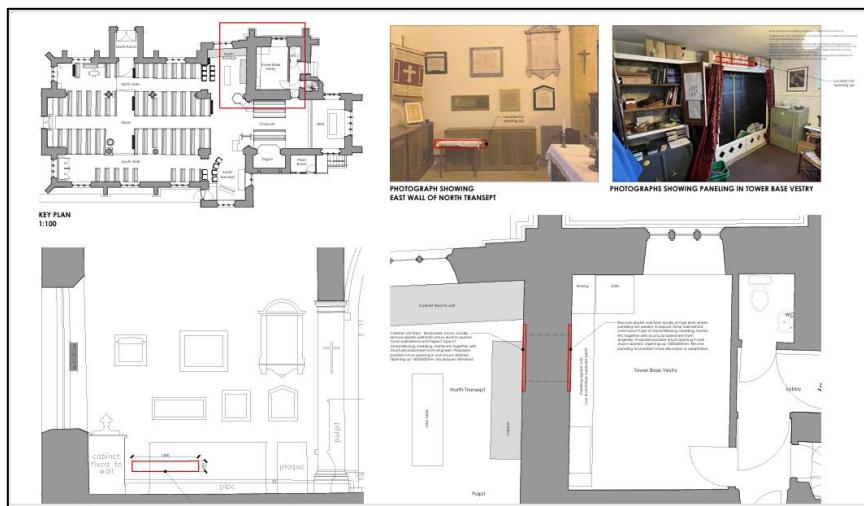
## Introduction

The PCC are proposing to install a new WC at the base of the tower which will be accessed by a new doorway in the North Transept east wall/tower wall. An application for the works has been submitted to the DAC and their Review Pre-Consultation feedback is outlined below: -

*The committee considered the proposals for the west end of the Nave as were discussed in broad terms at the delegation visit. The western proposals also seem to be acceptable to the local authority, CBC and the SPAB. The newest proposals seek to place the WC facilities in the base of the tower, with access from the North Transept through a new doorway. This seems a practical position, away from the worship area, and with enough discretion available to users (which is rarely during services themselves). The committee support this principle. SPAB has raised concerns about breaking through historic masonry to form the doorway into the proposed WC. This is an issue that needs to be further evidenced and discussed in the Impact statement which forms part of the very good Statement of Significance. The North Transept is potentially part of the 12th/early 13th century church and so possibly, its east wall giving on to the tower vestry, could be of this date. However, the committee considered that according the new and more accurate survey, it does appear that the Transept east wall was rebuilt when the tower was constructed in its present position in 1790. Given that the tower needs a thick wall with a good footing, this would make structural sense. The PCC needs to explore the question of cutting through late eighteenth century (thick) masonry. The usability of the space is a point considered. The committee support the proposal in principle and encourage the PCC to formally develop the proposal to conduct further investigation and submit further evidence, to be presented in the Statement of Significance. It may well be that this can be clearly seen in the walling on site. (type of stone/ dressing bedding mortar etc).*

Consultation had taken place between the project architect and structural engineer, and they proposed that small areas of the plaster wall finish would be removed from the North Transept east wall/tower wall and on the west wall of the Vestry in the area of the proposed doorway to make an assessment of the wall's construction (Fig. 1).

The proposed opening up works would potentially reveal construction phases and help determine if the tower wall construction is late 18<sup>th</sup> century or earlier, therefore archaeological monitoring and recording was required during the works. A method statement for the archaeological work was produced by the writer of this document and submitted for the DACs approval (Faxon 2025).



**Figure 1.** Proposed opening up works (after Benjamin & Beauchamp Architects).

A licence was subsequently granted for the opening works (DAC 2025) on condition that: - *The works shall be overseen by Mr Keith Faxon in accordance with his method statement of March 2025.*

The subsequent works were undertaken on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2025.

## Archaeological Background

The Church is Grade II\* Listed, List entry number 1345781 (Historic England 2025), It is recorded as being late 12th Century with 15th and 19th Century work.

The Somerset Historic Environment Record (SHER) records the church has having fabric of 13th Century origins which was refashioned later. The lateral tower is late 18th Century and replaces a former central tower. Close examination of the fabric and proportions suggests that the church has Saxon origins. The church is of Ham Hill stone and has a north tower in a transeptal position. Thought to be earlier than the 14th Century but remodelled in the early 19th Century, SHER Record No: 53909 (South West Heritage Trust 2025).

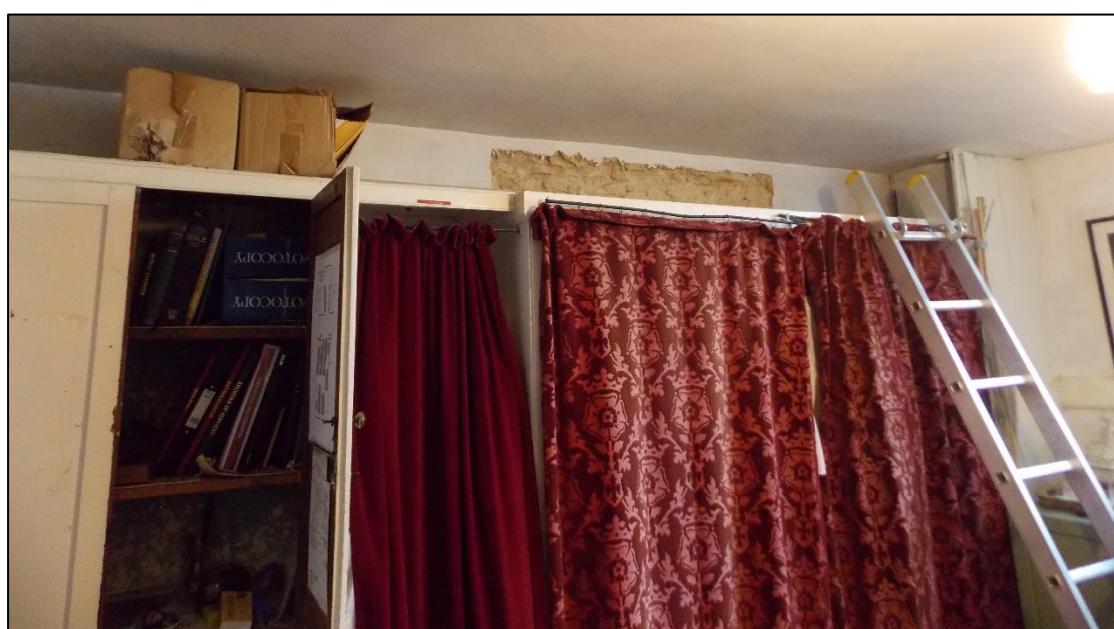
## Methodology

Staff from The Wessex Conservation Company carefully removed the plaster wall covering by hand, using a hammer and chisel over an area 1.3m long x 0.2m high on the North Transept east wall/tower wall and an area 1.3m long x 0.16m high on the west wall of the Vestry to reveal the underlying stonework construction (Figs. 2 & 3).

The exposed areas were recorded by written descriptions supplemented by digital photography and appropriate scales.



**Figure 2.** Plaster removed on N Transept E wall: facing E, 1m & 2m scales.



**Figure 3.** Plaster removed on Vestry wall: facing W.

## Results

Removal of up to 30mm of a very fine, lime plaster revealed that the underlying stonework of the North Transept east wall/tower wall consisted of random coursed Ham Stone blocks varying in length from 450mm to 500mm and between 80mm and 140mm in height (Fig. 4). None of the original bonding mortar was observed as the joints had been raked right back to allow the plaster to key into the wall.



**Figure 4.** Exposed Stonework N Transept E wall: facing E, Scale = 0.5m divisions.

The stonework revealed in the Vestry area consisted of random coursed angular limestone (only one piece of Ham Stone in the exposed area) bonded with a hard but crumbly mixed cream lime mortar and light brown stone dust? with frequent lumps and flecks of white lime. The stones in this exposed elevation were much smaller than those exposed in the North Transept east wall and ranged from 100mm x 60mm up to 300mm x 30mm (Fig. 5).

The plaster covering this section was between 10mm and 20mm in depth and was a lime and hair-based plaster with lumps of poorly mixed lime.



**Figure 5.** Exposed Stonework in Vestry: facing NW, Scale = 0.5m divisions.

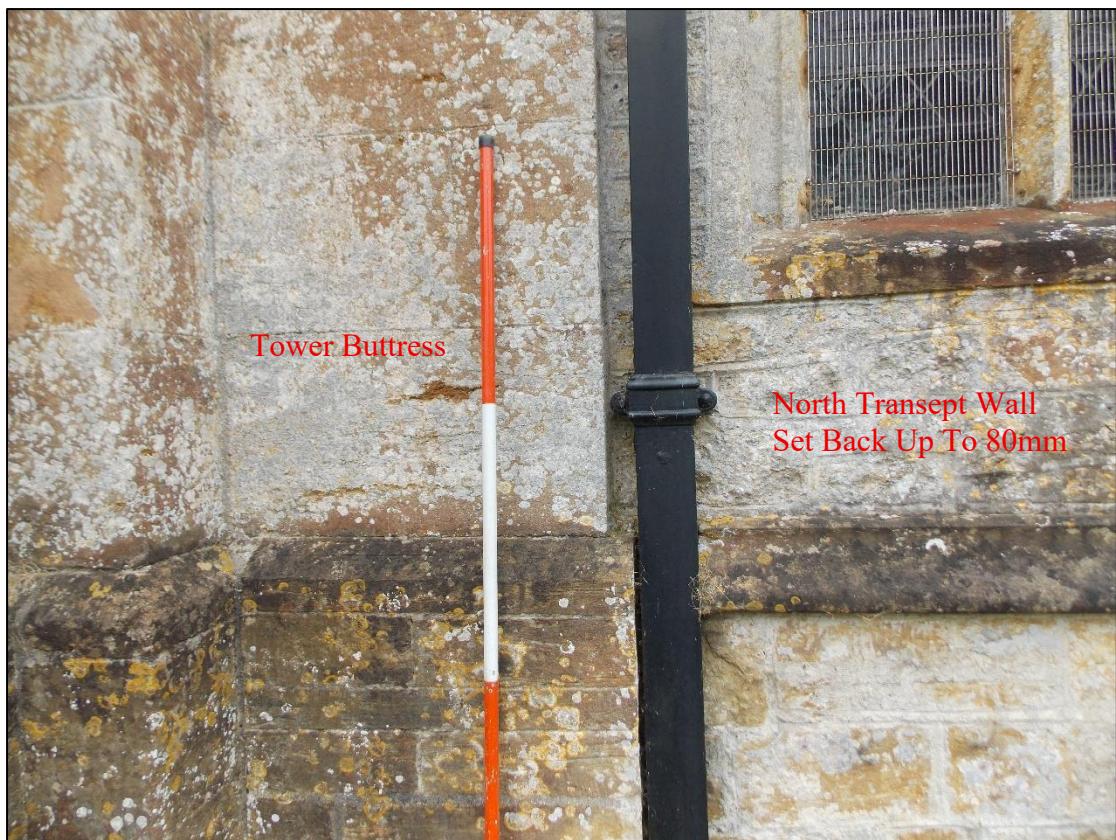
The relatively small exposures of the in-situ masonry did not reveal conclusive dating evidence for the west tower walls construction, therefore although not a requirement of the DAC licence it was considered prudent to visually inspect the external elevations of the tower during the site visit to see if this would help shed any light on its construction.

It quickly became apparent looking at the external west elevation of the tower that the North Transept wall had been constructed against both the NW tower buttress and the North Aisle buttress so therefore must have been rebuilt sometime after the tower's construction.

The masonry lower string course detail (straight chamfer) on the north facing elevation of the tower continues around the NW corner buttress, returns southwards and then runs west onto a second buttress before returning south again. At this junction the North Transept wall butts up against the tower buttress and is set back up to 80mm to the south, the North Transept wall string course detail is different and comprises of a cavetto and ovolو moulding (Fig. 6).

The parapet on top of the North Transept wall can also be seen to have been constructed around the towers buttress (Fig. 7).

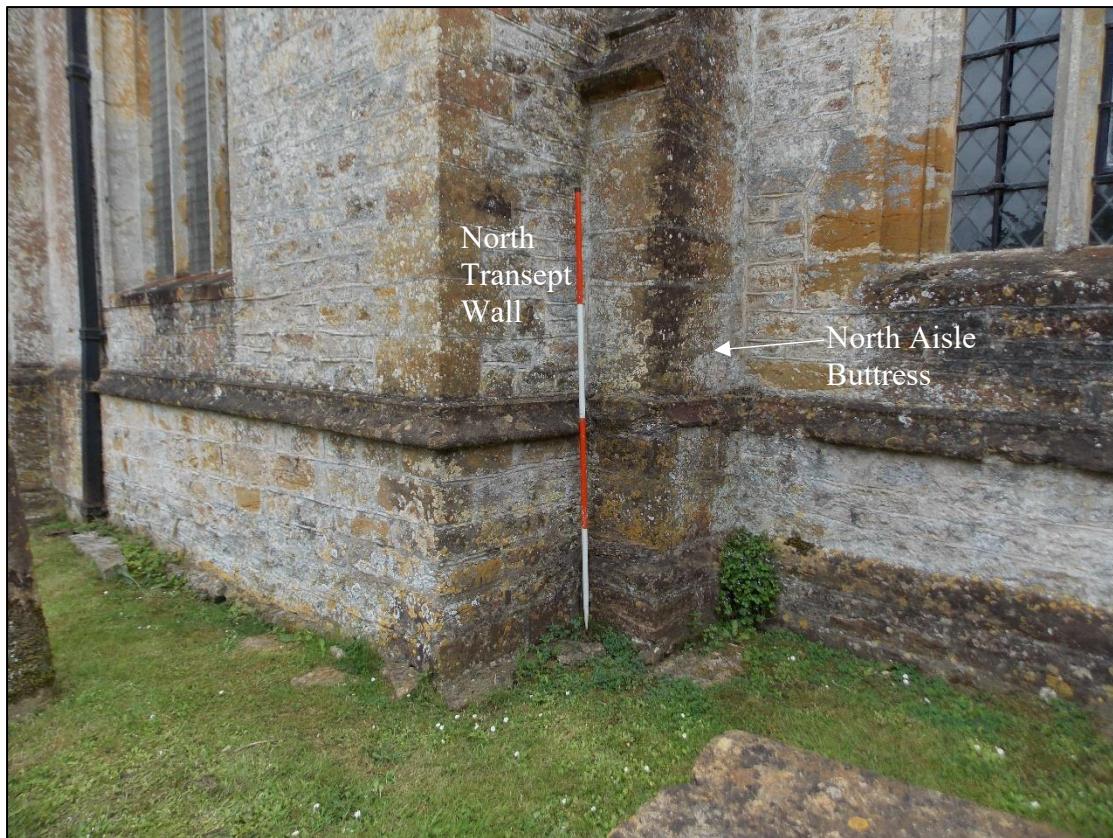
Where the west end of the North Transept wall returns south a straight joint (perpendicular) is clearly visible against the external buttress of the North Aisle (Fig. 8). It can also clearly be seen that although the string course detail on this section of wall is similar it is not as worn or as weathered as that on the North Aisle (Fig. 9).



**Figure 6.** Junction of N Transept wall and Tower Buttress: facing S, 0.5m divisions.



**Figure 7.** N Transept Parapet, constructed around Tower Buttress: facing E.



**Figure 8.** N Transept wall butting N Aisle Buttress: facing SE.



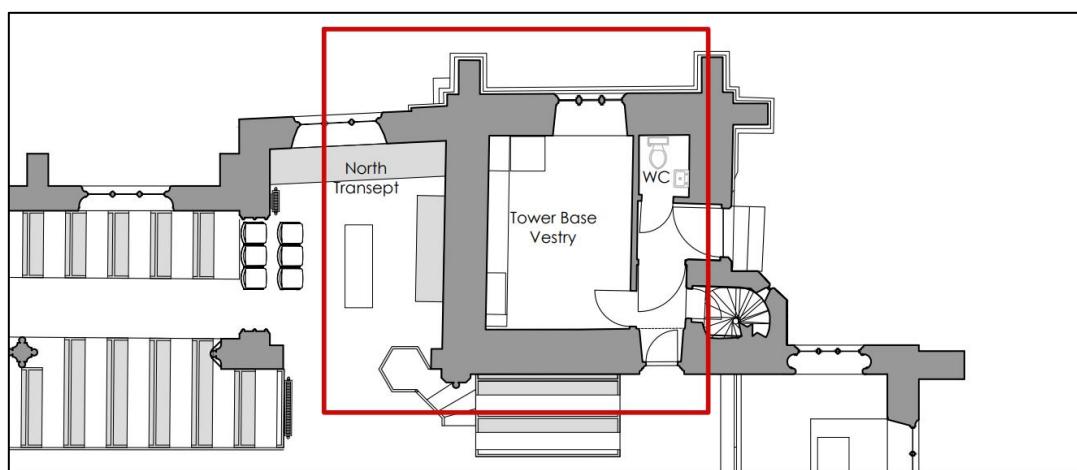
**Figure 9.** N Transept & N Aisle String Course detail: facing SE.

It was also noted that the base of the North Transept wall appeared to have a slight offset footing along its north face (Fig. 10) and the return to the south had also been constructed on top of random stone slabs. It was not clear if these were part of the rebuild of the North Transept wall or if it had been constructed on earlier foundations.



**Figure 10.** Offset footings on N Transept wall: facing SE, 2m scale.

The architects location plan for the opening up works also shows the alignment of the the North Transept wall is offset with the rest of the church which would also suggest that this wall had been rebuilt to accomodate the new tower layout (Fig. 11).



**Figure 11.** Plan showing N Transept wall alignment (after Benjamin & Beauchamp Architects).

## Conclusion

The opening up works revealed slight variations in construction techniques with the North Transept east wall/tower wall being built from Ham Stone blocks and the Vestry section constructed with smaller angular limestone and occasional lumps of Ham Stone.

There was no sign of any original mortar in the joints of the exposed area in the North Transept east wall as this appeared to have been removed to key in a modern plaster covering. This wall would appear to have been replastered along its length to a height of 1.22m above the existing floor (it is thicker than the plaster above) and also continues along the North Transept wall. There has probably been a damp problem in this area at some point in the past leading to the replastering of this area.

The lime mortar exposed in the Vestry section could date from any time from the medieval period to the present as lime mortar mixes vary little over time, but the presence of lumps and flecks of lime would suggest an earlier date rather than being a more modern mix. The lime and hair-based plaster removed from this area could be of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century date, but this could have been replaced in the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> Century as hair was still used in plaster coverings during these periods.

The churches building accounts during the construction of the tower between 1791 and 1794 published in the Journal of Yeovil Archaeological and Local History Society (Gittos 1991) record a payment of £1..4..4 to a Mr Ryall in October 1793 for the hair used by the plasterers. This confirms that hair was being used in the plaster mixes at this time.

There are also two records of payments for building works in the North Aisle, the first during Michaelmas 1792 where a Mr John Bulock is paid £50-00 for building the wall in the North Aisle and again during Whitsuntide 1793 when a Mr Randall is paid £3..17..6 for taking down and building up the North end Aisle. It is not clear as to what stage the towers construction was at during this time, but it would suggest that the North Aisle wall had been taken down to allow the building of the tower and the North Aisle wall was possibly rebuilt sometime between 1792 and 1793. It is assumed that these references also relate to the North Transept wall as the North Aisle wall does not appear to have been rebuilt.

The writer has not seen any church plans that show what was in the area of the North Transept east wall prior to the construction of the tower, but the external evidence would suggest that the towers design and construction continued southwards as its NW corner buttress has been encased by the east end of the North Aisle wall and the architects drawings show a symmetrical square plan of the tower with walls of a similar thickness (Fig. 11).

It is still not clear why the North Transept wall is offset to the rest of the church but there may have been a slight miscalculation during its construction. Interestingly though this wall does not seem to be tied into the tower or the North Aisle buttress it appears to just butt up against them (on the external elevations).

Although the opening up works did not reveal any conclusive dating evidence for the tower's construction, observations of the external elevations combined with the church

building records and the architects survey drawings would suggest that the North Transept east wall/tower wall is part of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century tower rebuild.

### **Acknowledgements**

The writer would like to thank the Church of St Michael & All Angels PCC for commissioning him to undertake the archaeological recording. Emma Green & Michael Hancock (Benjamin & Beauchamp Architects Ltd) & Toffer Beattie (PCC) are gratefully acknowledged for coordinating the works.

Moira & Brian Gittos are especially thanked for their interest onsite during the works and for imparting their expert knowledge of the church's history, for supplying the extract from the Yeovil Archaeological and Local History Society Journal and for mentioning their observations that the North Transept wall appeared to be wrapped around the tower buttress.

George Hannon and his team (The Wessex Conservation Company Ltd) are also gratefully acknowledged for their expertise and assistance during the works.

Grace Morris (Mann Williams Consulting Civil & Structural Engineers) is also thanked for her structural expertise and interest onsite.

Keith Faxon, July 2025.

## References

- Consistory Court of the Diocese of Bath and Wells, 2025. *East Coker, St Michael and All Angels – Investigative Works*. Form 7 (Rule 6.8 and Part 15) Licence, May 2025.
- Faxon, K., 2025. *Method Statement for the Archaeological Recording of minor opening up works on the internal tower walls for a structural assessment at the Church of St Michael, East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9JW*. Unpublished K. Faxon report, March 2025.
- Gittos, M & B., 1991. *The Building Accounts of East Coker Church, 1791 – 94*. Chronicle, Journal of Yeovil Archaeological and Local History Society, Volume 5 No. 2, April 1991.
- Historic England, 2025. *The National Heritage list for England*. <http://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1345781>.
- South West Heritage Trust, 2025. *Somerset Historic Environment Record*. <http://www.somersetheritage.org.uk>.



# CHURCH OF St MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, EAST COKER, YEOVIL SOMERSET BA22 9JW

## Archaeological Assessment of the proposed accessibility improvements in the North Porch and Carpark

To be read in conjunction with Benjamin + Beauchamp Architects  
Proposed Ground Floor & Site Plans



Prepared September 2025 for  
The PCC of the Church of St Micheal & All Angels, East Coker

Carried out by:  
Keith Faxon.  
Archaeological Consultant,  
40 Shaftgate Avenue,  
Shepton Mallet,  
Somerset BA4 5YE.  
Telephone: 07790577189  
[keithfaxon@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:keithfaxon@hotmail.co.uk)

## CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY.....	2
LOCATION .....	2
ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	2
METHODOLOGY.....	3
OBSERVATIONS.....	3
• Timber Step & Existing Doors.....	3
• Existing Porch & North Aisle Flooring.....	6
• External Works.....	8
CONCLUSION/DISCUSION.....	9
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	9
REFERENCES.....	10

### List of Figures

Figure 1. Timber step: facing S, 1m scales .....	4
Figure 2. Timber doors: facing S .....	4
Figure 3. Fixings on timber framework.....	5
Figure 4. Wood dowels, E side of porch entrance: facing E.....	5
Figure 5. Ham Stone flooring within N porch: facing SE.....	6
Figure 6. Worn Ham Stone step: facing SE.....	6
Figure 7. Ham Stone flooring running into N aisle: facing SW.....	7
Figure 8. North Aisle flooring: facing S.....	7
Figure 9. Hoggin covered pathway outside N porch: facing N.....	8
Figure 10. Existing tarmac covered roadway & turning area.....	8

The photograph on the cover shows the North Porch viewed from the south.

# **CHURCH OF St MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, EAST COKER, SOMERSET**

## **Archaeological Assessment of the proposed Accessibility Improvements in the North Porch & Carpark**

### **Summary**

A planning application for accessibility improvements in the North Porch will be submitted to Somerset Council (SC). This is an important archaeological and historical site, and any works here are likely to have an impact upon buried archaeological remains and therefore this assessment has been produced as part of the validation process.

The writer of this document has been commissioned by the PCC after consultation with the project architect 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 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 under showery conditions.

### **Location**

The church is centred on NGR ST 5388 1219, East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9JW.

### **Archaeological Background**

The Church is Grade II\* Listed, List entry number 1345781 (Historic England 2025), It is recorded as being late 12th Century with 15th and 19th Century work.

The Somerset Historic Environment Record (SHER) records the church has having fabric of 13th Century origins which was refashioned later. The lateral tower is late 18th Century and replaces a former central tower. Close examination of the fabric and proportions suggests that the church has Saxon origins. The church is of Ham Hill stone and has a north tower in a transeptal position. Thought to be earlier than the 14th Century but remodelled in the early 19th Century, SHER Record No: 53909 (South West Heritage Trust 2025).

In 2020 a small evaluation trench was excavated next to the west door to assess the possibilities for providing a level access. This showed that the ground had been built up over a recent ceramic drain and that the foundations of the church appeared to have been terraced into the natural subsoil (Faxon 2021).

The most recent field work undertaken was during June this year when minor opening up works were undertaken on the internal tower walls for a structural assessment. It was also hoped that these works would potentially reveal construction phases and help

determine if the tower wall construction is late 18th century or earlier. Although the works did not reveal any conclusive dating evidence for the tower's construction, observations of the external elevations combined with the church building records and the architects survey drawings would suggest that the North Transept east wall/tower wall is part of the 17th Century tower rebuild (Faxon 2025).

## **Methodology**

The proposed works involve removing the existing timber doors and timber step in the main entrance into the porch, resetting of the existing Ham Stone slabs in the porch to provide level access into the church, modify and lower floor in the North Aisle to form ramp and level access into the church, locally regrade existing external tarmac surface to allow level access from accessible parking spaces, remove existing path surface and replace with sandstone paving and construct a new sandstone raised dais level with stone steps and the construction of a new Doultong Stone kerb edge with Ham Stone copings.

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

## **Observations**

- **Timber Step & Existing Doors**

A timber step circa 140mm high x 95mm deep forms a threshold into the porch and has been bedded (but now loose) on a cement fillet on top of worn Ham Stone slabs (Fig. 1). The slabs below the step probably once formed the original entrance level into the porch, with the timber step and Ham Stone slabs within the porch being a later addition.

Two timber doors are attached to the inside of the porch entrance and sit at the same level as the timber step and Ham Stone flooring (Fig. 2). The date of the timber doors is uncertain, possibly 19<sup>th</sup> Century but appear much later, the framework for the doors has two phases of bolt fixings and one is very recent (Fig. 3).

The original doors and framework were possibly set within the arched entrance into the porch as there are a series of wooden dowls set within the face of the jambs (Fig. 4) and voussoirs.



**Figure 1.** Timber step: facing S, 1m scales



**Figure 2.** Timber doors: facing S



**Figure 3.** Fixings on timber framework



**Figure 4.** Wood dowels set within jambs, E side of porch entrance: facing E, 0.5m scale

- Existing Porch & North Aisle Flooring

A worn Ham Stone, slab floor runs south along the length of the porch until it butts a very worn Ham Stone step forming the threshold of the doorway into the North Aisle (Fig. 5). This step is up to 140mm high on its north side and up to 230mm deep (Fig. 6).

There is a drop of 40mm on the south side of the worn step onto another section of Ham Stone flooring that runs for 1.72m southwards into the North Aisle (Fig. 7) at which point the main North Aisle flooring steps up a further 130mm (Fig. 8).



Figure 5. Ham Stone flooring within N porch: facing SE, 1m scales

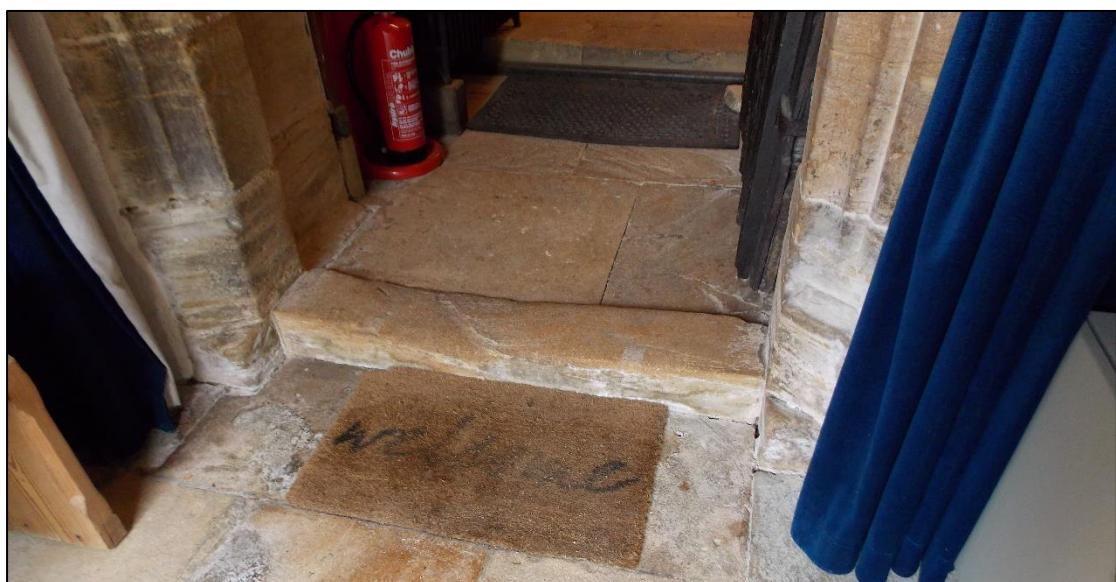


Figure 6. Worn Ham Stone step: facing SE



**Figure 7.** Ham Stone flooring running into N aisle: facing SW



**Figure 8.** North Aisle flooring: facing S

- External Works

The area for the proposed raised dais and steps consists of a Hoggin covered section of pathway sloping northwards outside the North Porch (Fig. 9) and the area for regrading of existing levels to allow level access from accessible parking spaces comprises of a tarmac covered roadway and turning area (Fig. 10).



**Figure 9.** Hoggin covered pathway outside N porch: facing N



**Figure 10.** Existing tarmac covered roadway & turning area: facing SW

## **Conclusion/Discussion**

The existing North Aisle/church flooring is approximately 370mm higher than the ground level outside the North Porch, it is unclear why there is such a change in levels, but it means that at present there are two different levels of flooring within the porch making disabled access into the main body of the church very difficult.

These two different levels of flooring may be an earlier attempt to make access into the church easier rather than having a single step of up to 370mm in height. Both areas of flooring do not appear to be contemporary with the porch construction as the timber step and worn stone step sit too high against the stone doorway jambs. The areas of flooring are going to be reset but the original stones will be reused.

The timber step appears to be modern as do the timber doors and are not considered to be of great historical or archaeological importance.

The Ham Stone step appears to have been worn down over a considerable amount of time and is unlikely to have got this worn in its present location so may have been reused from elsewhere in the church. This step is considered to be of historical significance and should be retained in its current location, if possible, but it can be lowered or raised to accommodate the new flooring scheme if necessary.

It is unclear how far the churchyard extends to the west, but it is assumed that it must have extended as far as the former Coker Court boundary as there is at least one remaining Headstone on the east side of this boundary which appears to still be in-situ. Therefore it is highly likely that any excavation work associated with the construction of the new dais and regrading of the existing tarmac surface is likely to uncover disarticulated human remains, in-situ burials and possibly brick or stone constructed burial vaults.

If consent is given for the proposed access improvement works, then these will be subject to archaeological monitoring and recording in the form of a watching brief. A Written Scheme of archaeological investigation (WSI) has been produced for the proposed reordering works at the church which do not require planning approval, and this has been tailored to include the access improvement works (Faxon 2025).

## **Acknowledgements**

The writer would like to thank the Church of St Michael & All Angels PCC for commissioning him to undertake the archaeological assessment.

Emma Green & Michael Hancock (Benjamin & Beauchamp Architects Ltd) & Toffer Beattie (PCC) are gratefully acknowledged for coordinating the works.

Keith Faxon, September 2025

## References

Faxon, K., 2021. Church of St Michael & All Angels, East Coker, Somerset. *Report on Archaeological Investigations external to the west door*. Unpublished K. Faxon report, February 2021.

Faxon, K., 2025. Church of St Michael & All Angels, East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9JW. *Report on the Archaeological Recording of minor opening up works on the internal tower walls for a structural assessment*. Unpublished K. Faxon report, July 2025.

Faxon, K., 2025. *Specification for the Archaeological Monitoring of the Proposed reordering works at the Church of St Michael & All Angels, East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9JW*. Unpublished K. Faxon report, September 2025.

Historic England, 2025. *The National Heritage list for England*.  
<http://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1345781>.

South West Heritage Trust, 2025. *Somerset Historic Environment Record*.  
<http://somersetheritage.org.uk>.



---

# Specification for the Archaeological Monitoring of the Proposed reordering works at the Church of St Michael & All Angels, East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9JW

---

OASIS Ref No: 2-536495

Prepared September 2025 for the PCC of the Church of St  
Michael & All Angels

Keith Faxon  
Archaeological Consultant  
40 Shaftgate Avenue, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA4 5YE  
Tel:07790577189  
keithfaxon@hotmail.co.uk

## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1.0 SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.0 SITE LOCATION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5.0 REQUIREMENT FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6.0 OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SCHEDULE OF WORKS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
• <b>Fieldwork.....</b>	<b>4</b>
• <b>Post Excavation.....</b>	<b>6</b>
• <b>Publication.....</b>	<b>6</b>
• <b>Archive.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## **Specification for the Archaeological Monitoring of the proposed reordering works at the Church of St Michael & All Angels, East Coker, Somerset**

### **1.0 Summary**

The proposed works are located within the church and churchyard of the Grade II\* Listed medieval church of St Michael & All Saints. This is an important archaeological and historical site, and any works here are likely to have an impact upon buried archaeological remains.

It is possible that the ground works associated with this development will affect buried deposits, unmarked graves, and other significant archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that an archaeological watching brief is carried out during the development to ensure that any elements of the project having archaeological significance are recorded as they are encountered.

### **2.0 Site Location**

2.1 The church is centred on NGR ST 5388 1219, East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9JW.

### **3.0 Project Background**

- 3.1 Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) feedback for the proposed works concluded that limited archaeological investigation is noted in a 2021 report. This report does not cover all the impacted areas due to the level changes now proposed. If the scheme is approved, a Written Scheme of archaeological investigation (WSI) condition is required.
- 3.2 Therefore this document has been produced in response to the above feedback and will be submitted to the DAC for approval.
- 3.3 The proposed internal works include the installation of a WC at the base of the tower which will be accessed by a new doorway in the north transept east wall/tower wall. Removal of pews and raised platforms at the west end of the nave, relocation of the font, installation of a new servery and associated drainage at the west end of the church and the lifting and resetting of several existing flagstones in the north aisle and north porch.
- 3.4 External proposals include the removal of the former Coker Court boundary wall, regrading of existing carpark levels to allow level access from accessible vehicular parking spaces and the construction of a raised dais and steps outside the north porch.
- 3.5 The removal of existing platforms or existing flooring and any excavation works associated with the installation of the new WC and servery within these areas are likely to uncover earlier floor levels and construction phases. The external drainage excavation works; regrading of existing levels and construction of new steps are likely to reveal disturbed burial deposits and unmarked graves.

- 3.6 The PCC of the Church in consultation with their architects Benjamin + Beauchamp Architects Ltd have appointed Keith Faxon Archaeological Consultant to produce this document and carry out the archaeological monitoring.

#### **4.0 Archaeological Background**

- 4.1 The Church is Grade II\* Listed, List entry number 1345781 (Historic England 2025), It is recorded as being late 12th Century with 15th and 19th Century work.
- 4.2 The Somerset Historic Environment Record (SHER) records the church has having fabric of 13th Century origins which was refashioned later. The lateral tower is late 18th Century and replaces a former central tower. Close examination of the fabric and proportions suggests that the church has Saxon origins. The church is of Ham Hill stone and has a north tower in a transeptal position. Thought to be earlier than the 14th Century but remodelled in the early 19th Century, SHER Record No: 53909 (South West Heritage Trust 2025).
- 4.3 In 2020 a small evaluation trench was excavated next to the west door to assess the possibilities for providing a level access. This showed that the ground had been built up over a recent ceramic drain and that the foundations of the church appeared to have been terraced into the natural subsoil (Faxon 2021).
- 4.4 The most recent field work undertaken was during June this year when minor opening up works were undertaken on the internal tower walls for a structural assessment. It was also hoped that these works would potentially reveal construction phases and help determine if the tower wall construction is late 18<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. Although the works did not reveal any conclusive dating evidence for the tower's construction, observations of the external elevations combined with the church building records and the architects survey drawings would suggest that the North Transept east wall/tower wall is part of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century tower rebuild (Faxon 2025).

#### **5.0 Requirement for archaeological monitoring**

- 5.1 The proposed works would potentially damage or destroy archaeological remains which may be present on site. It has therefore been recommended that archaeological monitoring should take place to record the presence and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits.

#### **6.0 Objectives**

- 6.1 The objectives of the monitoring and recording are to gain information about the character, dating, form, integrity, and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits.
- 6.2 This project has the potential to address the following research aims listed in the South West Archaeological Research Framework (Webster 2008).

Research Aim 8: Utilize the survival of Medieval and later artefacts and buildings to their full extent.

Research Aim 32: Investigate and identify the locations of early Medieval religious buildings, monuments, and landscapes.

Research Aim 56: Utilize surviving buildings and records to understand liturgical and social change in Post-Medieval to Modern places of worship and cemeteries.

Research Aim: 59: Utilize the potential for good evidence from Early Medieval burials to address research questions.

Research Aim: 60: Use the excavation of Medieval burials and post-Medieval burials to study wider population and social issues.

- 6.3 The results of the monitoring and recording may be used to produce a record of the location, nature, and dates of any archaeological remains encountered on the site and add knowledge about the previous history of activity on the site.
- 6.4 The results may also provide information to influence future planning decisions in the area.

## **Schedule of works**

- **Fieldwork**

1. The archaeological monitoring will cover any areas to be disturbed by below ground works associated with the proposals including the removal of existing pew platforms and flooring within the church, external excavations, removal of the former boundary wall and existing surface reduction. The monitoring and recording will also be undertaken during the creation of the new doorway in the tower wall.
2. All archaeological work undertaken will accord with the directives within the SWHT, Somerset Archaeological Handbook (2017 currently being revised September 2025), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording (2023), the CIfA Universal guidance for archaeological excavation (2023), the Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists Guidance Note 1 (2013), English Heritage New Work in Historic places of Worship (2012) and the Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England, Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England (2017).
3. The writer of this document will be present at the start of the works to record the site in its present state and be on site throughout the works.
4. If significant archaeological remains or any deposits deemed worthy of in-situ preservation are revealed during the ground works, then excavation will cease, and the Senior Historic Environment Officer will be informed immediately of the findings and consulted for alternative mitigation strategies.

5. Any machine excavation should preferably be undertaken with a smooth bladed bucket (If ground conditions are suitable).
6. Any excess soil from the excavations should be disposed of within the churchyard as it is consecrated ground. If this is not possible then the DAC will be contacted for advice.
7. Enough time must be allowed for any exposed deposits to be cleaned, excavated fully, and recorded by the archaeologist prior to the excavation of foundation and service trenches.
8. Although the need for preservation in-situ of archaeological deposits is considered paramount all features/deposits should be characterised, and their stratigraphic relationships established and understood. Any features/deposits revealed during these works will be partially excavated, half-sectioned or sampled for evidence of function and date.
9. Any earlier foundations or phases of construction uncovered during the works should not be disturbed if possible. The architect will be informed immediately of any significant finds and consulted to see if the affected areas design can be modified to minimise or avoid damage to the deposits altogether.
10. Human Remains – Any disarticulated bones uncovered during the works will be collected from the excavated areas and placed in poly grip bags (doubled and labelled) and will either be immediately replaced in the ground as close to the area in which they were found or stored securely in the church until an alternative location within the church grounds can be determined. The discovery of articulated remains will again raise the question of whether the works design can be modified to avoid disturbance. The disturbance of intact burials should be avoided; the architect and the DAC Registrar will be informed immediately of their discovery. If disturbance is unavoidable then enough time must be allowed for the remains to be cleaned, recorded, and lifted with due care and respect by the archaeologist. Any complete burials that must be removed from the ground will again be stored in an appropriate secure location within the church until such time that they can be reburied in a consecrated place.
11. Depending on the geology and depositional environment of the site, as well as the nature of any archaeological deposits uncovered an environmental sampling strategy will be developed following Historic England's guidance (2015). Advice will be sought from appropriate specialists to ensure that any sampling will meet the project's needs.
12. All archaeological deposits will be recorded by written descriptions and digital photography. A measured plan, to an appropriate scale, will be made showing the location of all excavation areas relative to other features of the site. Each excavation context will also be recorded by means of a measured plan (usually 1:20) before it is removed in whole or part. Cross sections will also be recorded by means of a measured drawing (usually 1:10). All drawings and archaeological deposits will be levelled to Ordnance Survey Datum.

13. It may not be possible to fully understand archaeological features exposed in narrow foundation and service trenches therefore it may be necessary to expand the excavation areas to fully interpret any deposits revealed.

14. A minimum of 15% of the total cost of the project budget must represent contingency for unexpected discoveries and/or scientific analysis/dating.

- **Post Excavation**

15. All finds recovered from the monitoring will be retained and all finds excluding metalwork, will be washed, and marked where possible with a code identifying the site and context.

16. All finds (excluding human remains) will be removed from the site for processing and conservation where necessary, in preparation for further analysis and archiving. Provision will be made for specialist treatment of finds by a conservator, where necessary.

17. If only small amounts of multi period pottery and small finds are recovered during the works, the writer of this document will identify and report upon them. If specialist reports are required then recognised specialists will include Peter Leach (Romano-British & Medieval Pottery), Lorraine Higbee (Animal Bone), Dr Martin Green (Prehistoric Pottery) and Keith Faxon (Lithics).

- **Publication**

18. A report on the archaeological monitoring will be sent to the Somerset HER within 6 months of the completion of the works (or such other period as may be mutually agreed).

19. A summary report will be produced, to appear in the Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (and where appropriate a national journal or other publication). This will be sent to the Somerset HER before the end of the January following the calendar year in which the work ended.

- **Archive**

20. The archaeological archive and finds resulting from this project will be deposited with the Somerset Museums Service. This will be in accordance with their Collections and Development Policy and Conditions for the Acceptance of Archaeological Archives in Section 10 (Archiving) of the Somerset Archaeology Handbook.

Keith Faxon, September 2025.

## References

- Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England. 2017. *Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England*. <http://archaeology.org/apabe/pdf/APABE>.
- Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists, 2013. *Archaeological requirements for work on churches and churchyards*, Guidance Note 1. <http://churcharchaeology.org/ADAC.html>.
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2023. *Universal guidance for archaeological excavation*. Reading.
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2023. *Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording*. Reading.
- English Heritage, 2015. *Environmental Archaeology A guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods from Sampling and Recovery to Post excavation (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. Still awaiting re-branding to Historic England, September 2025.
- English Heritage, 2012. *New Work in Historic Places of Worship*. <http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications>.
- Historic England, 2025. *The National Heritage list for England*. <http://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1345781>.
- Faxon, K., 2021. Church of St Michael & All Angels, East Coker, Somerset. *Report on Archaeological Investigations external to the west door*. Unpublished K. Faxon report, February 2021.
- Faxon, K., 2025. Church of St Michael & All Angels, East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9JW. *Report on the Archaeological Recording of minor opening up works on the internal tower walls for a structural assessment*. Unpublished K. Faxon report, July 2025.
- South West Heritage Trust, 2025. *Somerset Historic Environment Record*. <http://somersetheritage.org.uk>.
- South West Heritage Trust, 2017 (Consultation Draft September 2025). *Somerset Archaeological Handbook*. Taunton.
- Webster, C. J. 2008. *The Archaeology of South West England, South West Archaeological Research Framework Resource Assessment and Research Agenda*. Somerset County Council Taunton.