

Project Update 15 - March 2016

- 1 **Building Works** -The building works have progressed slowly but steadily since the last report in October.
 - 1.1 The Library roof is complete; the ceiling is now newly lime-plastered and the air treatment system is in place. The strong room is now ready, with the internal door fitted. The floor is complete and awaiting the elm floorboards.
 - 1.2 The brick path against the South wall is now nearing completion and the steps and wall onto the Garth garden are also nearly ready. During the creation of the steps on the North East side of the cloister some archaeology was discovered that appeared to be early Norman and it is thought that this was the original Chapter House. This showed an apsidal end of a fairly small building, which is suggestive of the original monastic community. This has all been photographed and recorded.
 - 1.3 The Vestry is nearing completion, with the floor now in and the ceiling plastered.
 - 1.4 The crypt stone flooring is nearly complete and the stone floor in the Ithamar Chapel is now being grouted. This is now looking truly beautiful and enhances the beauty of the pillars as they rise above it.
 - 1.5 The light fittings are round the pillars and the electrics are nearing completion.
 - 1.6 The flooring is now being laid in the Gundulf crypt, which is the oldest part of the crypt, where the exhibition will be installed.
 - 1.7 The organ ducting in Gundulf's crypt has been repositioned so that the duct now lies flush with the wall, enabling a more effective exhibition space. This entailed some careful tunnelling work under the Quire, together with effective underpinning. The organ duct is now reconnected and we can once more enjoy the full tone of the organ
 - 1.8 As referred to in October, the Gundulf shaft, which houses the air handling ducting, has proved problematic. The solution envisaged by the project architects, of tunnelling down under the foundations at a depth of over 2 metres, proved unfeasible and prohibitively costly at an additional cost of £500,000. We therefore took the decision to remove this area from the project so that the main crypt could be finished. We will partition off the North end of the Gundulf crypt, where the shaft is, and will complete this as a separate project after the main project is completed. This work will be undertaken for us by the Royal Engineers and will be led by our Cathedral Architect. We have already commenced planning for the work required and will not tunnel down but will take a more realistic solution to the CFCE. Advice from the Cathedral Archaeologist is that the solution presently proposed is likely to be acceptable.



New Crypt flooring

- 1.9 The platform lift from the Vestry to the main crypt has been subject to delays due to the discovery of foundations to the West wall of the vestry. Foundations are rare in the Cathedral and seem to crop up only in places where they are particularly obstructive to our architect's designs. Despite this set back, the lift is under construction and will not delay either the opening of the exhibition or the use of the Vestry for Musical and Educational purposes.

2. Exhibition and Vestry Fit Out

- 2.1 The exhibition cases and mounts are ready for installation as soon as the building works are complete and this is now likely to be in late April.
- 2.2 The first crypt exhibition is planned and ready and will take place despite the lack of the air conditioning system as each case will have the required air control in situ.
- 2.3 The library fit out and exhibition cases are also ready and installation is planned for May/June, to run concurrently with the crypt installation.
- 2.4 The Vestry fit out will also take place after completion of the building works and this is planned for June. This fit out is for storage space for vestments and music and will enable proper use of the space for both music rehearsal and educational purposes.



New doorway into Vestry

3. Creation of Community Choir

- 3.1 A community children's choir commenced in September last year. The choir meets to rehearse weekly and sang at the Christmas Crib service, which was its first outing. Over 20 children from local primary schools are involved and they are greatly enjoying the musical experience. We hope to be able to offer an apprenticeship to a gap year music student as an enhancement of the offering.
- 3.2 The creation of the Vestry music and education space will be a tremendous asset for both this new outreach choir and the Cathedral choirs.

4. Activity Plan

- 4.1. We have re-visited the activity plan and re-formed it into a more user friendly and achievable format. While the outcomes and requirements remain the same we have been able to group it more effectively into work streams that can be monitored and measured.
- 4.2. The story trails have continued to be popular and these are now being developed in line with each exhibition, so that there is a clear correlation between family activities and the crypt and library exhibits. We are currently offering 'Illuminating Beasts' family fun days, giving all ages the opportunity to explore medieval manuscripts and to create something of beauty for themselves, using pen and ink.
- 4.3. The exhibition 'Rochester's Mystery Book' which centres around the Textus Roffensis, will be the first to be shown in the crypt and this will be ready to run as soon as the space is fitted out.

4.4. Another exhibition and related events in the course of planning are 'Holey Roses', which will be a floral display celebrating the roses in the Garth and the work of Dean Hole, a late 19th C Dean of Rochester who founded the National Rose Society and wrote many books on horticulture. Many of his works are in the library and this exhibition also highlights the eclectic nature of the library collection as participants will be invited to create a display celebrating an item in the collection that appeals to them.

4.5. The library cataloguing project is now complete and the books are ready to return home as soon as the library is ready for them. The collaboration with University of Kent has been a success of this project and will continue when the library returns as students will be encouraged to use the library for academic research.



Library roof restoration

4.6. As the start to this academic collaboration, students were invited to two live 'leafing through the Library' events held at the Templeman library in the University of Kent. These displayed some of the precious volumes from the library and students were asked to study a book of their choice and then give a short presentation on interesting and historical aspects of the book. This served as an excellent introduction to the library and a good start to the outreach to and collaboration with the university.

5. Restoring the Garth garden

5.1. The garden has been disrupted by the project and it has been impossible for the gardeners to keep the area tidy and weed free. The installation of the large soakaway in the centre of the Garth lawn affected the lawn badly, although this has been leveled and re-seeded.

5.2. The contractors have now mostly cleared the area and it has been possible to prune the roses and start weeding the beds.

5.3. We aim to restore and re-shape the Garth to create a fitting rose memorial to Dean Hole that will enhance the Cathedral and add further interest for our visitors. We are creating a new planting scheme and are applying for horticultural grant funding for this project.

6. Conclusion

6.1. As we near the conclusion of the capital element of this project we are truly seeing how much the crypt and library have been enhanced by what has been achieved. In creating this new visitor area we will be able to reach out to visitors in a way that has never been possible before and to use the space in the vestry for music and education that will enhance the lives of children in Medway. This outreach is all part of our mission 'to nurture the radical hope of human flourishing in Jesus Christ'.

Gilly Wilford - Project Director - March 2016



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