

Update on the Blockley Church refurbishment project - October 2019

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It is well over a year since a large number of individuals sent in their completed questionnaires and many church groups, ranging from the choir to the cleaning team, were consulted about their needs and aspirations. The outcome was an Architect's Brief compiled by a working party of the PCC. This is available at the back of church and on the church website together with regular updates on the project.

To save you reading it all, the key requirements identified were:

- Making the church more welcoming for all, especially children and families
- Making it more inclusive physically and spiritually
- Providing a space for personal prayer
- Improving the visitor experience
- Providing a toilet and baby change
- Completion of decoration of the nave
- Improving the lighting and heating including a permanent fix to the boiler house roof
- Providing permanent projection facilities
- Maximising existing assets e.g. the room at the base of the tower and the beautiful South porch

In April of this year a firm of architects was appointed with considerable experience of work on ancient churches. Their task is to meet these requirements whilst preserving and, if possible, enhancing the wonderful medieval architecture. Improved lighting, getting rid of clutter with better storage and consolidating the numerous additions to the church in recent times will go towards this.

An exciting part of the project has been the examination of the blocked-up archway between the nave and the tower by an archaeologist and a structural engineer. Advice received is that the archway could be re-opened so that the large room in the base of the tower can be put to good use.

Close examination of the archway reveals the changes that were made since the 12th century as towers came and went, a gallery was added at the rear of the nave and then removed and archway styles changed. It seems that a drawing in the Smeeton book about the church is incorrect as the full-width rounded arch was unlikely to ever have been open when there was a tower. The archway is in poor condition on the tower side probably due to excavation in the early 20th century in a failed attempt to reopen the arch.

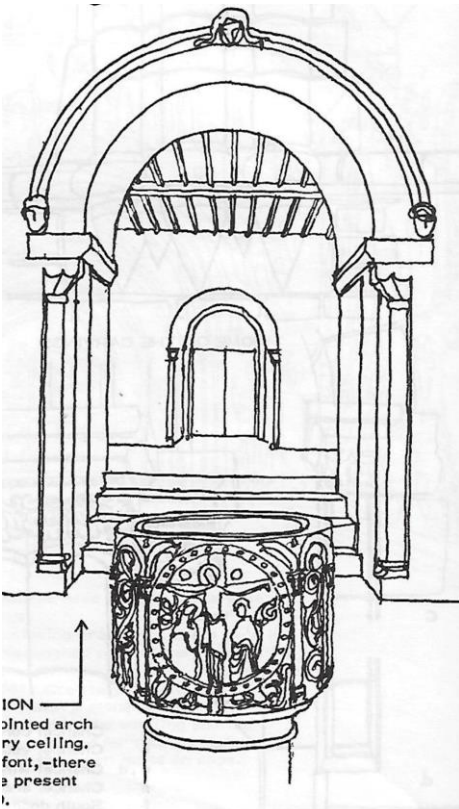
The PCC are currently considering the first draft plans from the architect and, before anything is finalised, there will be further consultation in the parish and with church and statutory authorities. We are hoping to be ready for this early in the new year.



The blocked-off access into the tower. - Small pointed arch within a larger pointed arch which replaced an original Norman rounded arch!



From the tower side, it is a mess and needs work to stabilise it.



Fascinating artist's impression in Smeeton's book but it is probably wrong. It is now doubtful there were steps or a tower when the original Norman arch was in use as a West door.