ISSUE 172 | JULY / AUGUST 2018 | £5 €7.50

ISSN 0268-912X
barcode.co.uk
770268912001 11

CHURCH building & HERITAGE REVIEW



PROJECT

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH MINCHINHAMPTON, STROUD

by Antony Feltham-King RIBA
St.Ann's Gate Architects LLP

On Friday April 27, 2018, the church and the wider community gathered at Holy Trinity Church Minchinhampton, near Stroud, in the company of HRH the Princess Royal, and the Bishop of Gloucester, the Rt.Rev.Rachel Treweek, to celebrate the completion of the church building re-ordering project. The occasion marked the end of several years of effort by the church to create a warm, welcoming and flexible place of worship, inviting and open to all.

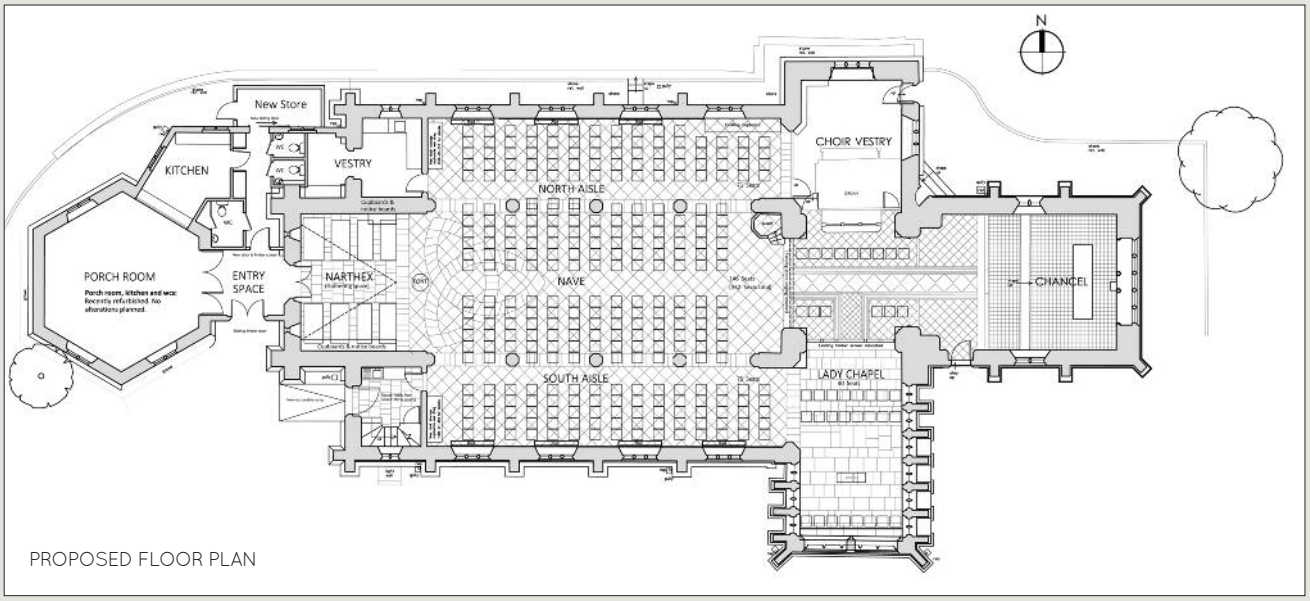
The church building has a fascinating history, with its origins in the thirteenth century, but featuring two major nineteenth century campaigns of work. In the 1840s the eastern and western arms of the building were completely re-built to designs by Thomas Foster of Bristol, leaving the Medieval central tower and transepts. The generous chancel and the open and airy nave all date from his restoration. In the 1870s, the church employed the renowned architect William Burges to make further improvements. Burges was rather rude about Foster's work, describing it as a 'very unsatisfactory version of the Perpendicular style' and lamenting his lack of restoration of Medieval windows. Burges designed the unusual east window, with its double-plane, to compliment the design of the glorious medieval south window of the south transept.

Coming into the present decade, the church commenced a period of thinking to examine what could be done to adapt the building to suit the needs of today. A thorough programme of discussions and community consultations was instigated, including a seminar led by Richard Giles. This had the effect of galvanising the church into action, encouraged by the thought that an historic building, with a grade I listing, could be adapted to suit the needs of the twenty-first century.

Alongside the 'liturgical' thinking, the church commissioned a series of technical studies of the building, with assistance from architect Ann-Marie Fallon, at that time working for the Regeneration Partnership based in Winchester. One of the key elements of analysis was the installation of an environmental monitoring system, to keep track of temperature and relative humidity (RH) inside and outside the building. The results of the monitoring corroborated the empirical understanding that the building was extremely damp. The RH was consistently recorded at 80-90%, and this was made manifest by the condensation problems on windows and wall surfaces during periods of cold weather.

In order to take the project forward, the church appointed Antony Feltham-King of Salisbury-based St.Ann's Gate Architects, in May





PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN



2015. The architect then worked closely with a small group established by the church to develop proposals for the eventual approval of the church and the Diocese.

In order to create a more flexible worship space, and to address the shortcomings in the heating system, it was decided to focus the work on removing the existing pews and their platforms, and the surrounding stone paved floor. In their place it was proposed to install a new underfloor heated stone floor, raised up slightly to bring the level of the nave and aisles to the same plane as the choir and chancel. Raising the floor level brought several advantages. It reduced the potential impact of the works on below ground archaeological remains, and it unified the floor levels to create full accessibility, with maximum flexibility in placement of furniture.

A key part of the proposal was the movement of the early twentieth century chancel screen to a new location facing into the Lady Chapel (located in the south transept). This proved a little controversial, as the screen was, in part, a memorial to the fallen of the Great War. In addition, it was designed by noted twentieth century architect FC Eden, who also provided designs for the decoration of the chancel ceiling later in his career.

The church obtained a Faculty for the works in July 2017, following careful deliberations by the Gloucester Diocesan Chancellor. She was persuaded to allow the project to proceed, including the movement of the screen, against some objections, on the basis of the quality of the proposals, the community benefits arising and the need to address the environmental shortcomings of the building.

In parallel with the granting of the Faculty, the church and its advisors engaged in a negotiation with local specialist contractor Nick Miles to carry out the work against a key deadline of Advent 2017. The church regularly plays host to the well-known local choral group, the Stuart Singers, and tickets had already been sold for concerts planned for early December. The building needed to be ready for these events, with heating operable and a level floor to walk upon. These key dates dictated the programme.

Work commenced on site in late August 2017, with the removal of the pews and the timber pew platforms. The stone pavings were then removed and their substrate carefully excavated the short distance to the required formation level. This was carried out by the main contractor and his team, working hand-in-glove with local archaeological specialist Chiz Harward of Urban Archaeology, based in Stroud.

The removal of the nineteenth century nave floor immediately revealed the cause of the high humidity levels within the building. A culvert had been laid during the 1840s re-construction of the nave, ›

Nick Miles Building Contractors Ltd
• CONSERVATION AND GENERAL BUILDING CONTRACTORS •



Specialists in the care and repair of traditional and historic buildings, churches, etc. and in the use of hydraulic and non-hydraulic lime mortar, render and lime-wash.

Pleased to have been the main contractor for the Minchinhampton project.

t: **01452 770855** m: **07976 383969**
e: **nick_miles@btconnect.com**

www.nickmilesbuildingcontractors.co.uk

1 WELLESLEY COTTAGES WELLS ROAD BISLEY STROUD GLOS. GL6 7AF

PROJECT

taking rainwater from the northern side of the building under the floor to the south side. Unfortunately, the culvert had been built using sections of stone to form a channel and these has parted company, allowing moisture to leak out into the sub-floor area. This was a clear 'smoking-gun' in relation to the dampness issue, and a new joint-less pipe was laid from north to south, below the new floor construction, to safely take the surface water outside the building.

The removal of the existing floor revealed the existence of burials to be bridged over, and also that some of the arcade piers bases were not very well founded. The consulting engineer, Gary Wood of SFK Consulting from Southampton, hurriedly designed some reinforced concrete slabs to address these potential weak points in the structure. Once these foundation issues were successfully addressed, the building-up of the new floor could begin.

From the outset, it was proposed to use the Jupiter underfloor heating system. This system brings huge advantages in terms of speed of installation, and this was particularly useful in a project with a very tight programme and an immovable key date for the Stuart Singers' concerts. The sub-floor was brought up to a uniform level using recycled foamed glass, which formed the insulating layer below the new heating system, topped off with a double layer of Fermacell boarding. Jupiter's technicians then left site whilst the electricians and heating engineers laid-in their infrastructure onto the Fermacell surface.

With the services all in place, Jupiter returned to site to install the underfloor heating loops into pre-cut insulation batts, linked to the manifolds sited above floor level in four locations. Jupiter's work concluded with the installation of their 'screed replacement tiles'. These terracotta tiles are tongued and grooved and are adhered to each other to provide a robust 'floating' substrate. The terracotta also helps to spread out the heat from the heating loops below. This layer provided a 'temporary' floor surface, allowing the church to make use of the building during Advent and, crucially, to host the concerts programmed for that period. The heating was commissioned in time to make use of the underfloor heating during this period too.

In early January, stonemasons from Centreline Stonemasonry arrived on site to lay the new stone pavings onto the terracotta substrate. The stone arrived pre-cut from the quarry, and was patiently laid, like a giant jigsaw puzzle. This included the large Holy Trinity emblem associated with the re-located font, picked out in contrasting toned pavings. The new raised floor level of the nave is made accessible from the western porch by means of a gently


03

ramped paved area, featuring ledger stones previously laid in the narthex area. The flexible seating is provided by the use of Theo chairs by Trinity Church Seating.

The project reached final completion in time for the major celebratory event held on April 27, 2018. The smooth running of the project is a reflection on the dedication of the many individuals and companies involved, all working effectively together under the direction of the main contractor. The church now has a building that provides the flexibility desired at the outset, together with a welcome which is warm, both physically and metaphorically. ■

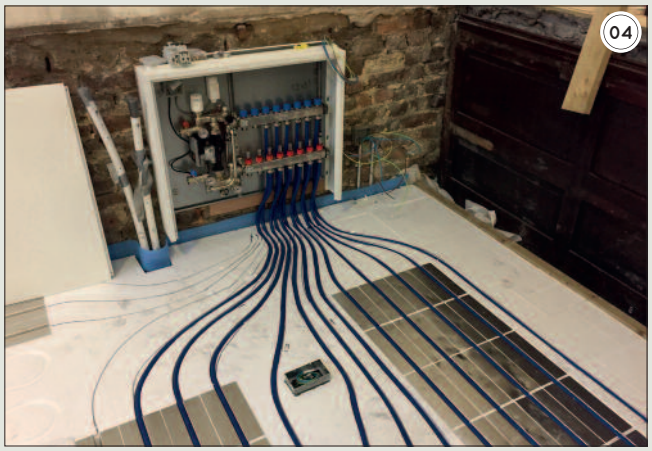

08

PROJECT TEAM:
Client: The Churchwardens and PCC of the Church of Holy Trinity Minchinhampton
Architect: St.Ann's Gate Architects
Consulting Engineer: SFK Consulting
Main Contractor: Nick Miles Building Contractors Ltd
Underfloor Heating: Jupiter Underfloor Heating
Archaeology: Urban Archaeology
Stonemasons: Centreline Stonemasonry

Holy Trinity Church, Bell Lane, Minchinhampton, Stroud GL6 9BW

IMAGES:
01 Before works. **02** The nave on completion. **03** Excavation in progress. **04** Typical manifold. **05** Fermacell being laid. **06** Terracotta layer in progress. **07** Pavings being laid. **08** Screen in new location facing into Lady Chapel.















JUPITER
UNDERFLOOR HEATING

Specialists in dry installed floor constructions and underfloor heating.

Warming congregations for 15 years.

Tel: 01276 859 066 info@jupiterunderfloorheating.com