

Norwich Diocesan Advisory Committee Report of a Visit

Church: Blofield, St Andrew and St Peter **Grade I** **BrdDC** **10/202**

Date of Visit: 15th February 2012 **PRE:** 3305 **Electoral Roll:** 102

DAC Representatives: The Venerable Jan McFarlane (Archdeacon of Norwich), Mr Alan Kefford (Chairman Designate), Mr Neil Birdsall, Mr Charles Carus, Dr Andrew Rogerson, Mrs Kate Weaver, Mrs Jean Gosling (DAC Secretary) and Miss Caroline Rawlings (Assistant DAC Secretary).

Parish Representatives: The Revd Paul Cubitt (Rector), Mr Jim Morley (Treasurer), Keith Beck (Project Team), Mrs Sue Shillam (Project Team), Mr Jeremy Bell (JBKS Architects- part of meeting only).

Other representatives: Mrs Jude Johncock (Case Officer - Church Buildings Council), and Mr Anthony Rossi (SPAB)

Purpose of Visit:

To discuss the proposed internal re-ordering, as shown on drawings Nos. BLO 010/02, 011/02, 012/01, 013/01, 014/01, 015/01, 017, 021/02 and a 3D drawing prepared by JBKS Architects.



Jan MacFarlane welcomed everyone to the meeting, and explained that any opinions given at this meeting are those of the individuals only, not the DAC, and that the purpose of the meeting is to ensure that the Committee is better informed when it comes to considering the case at its next meeting. The Revd Paul Cubitt explained that the project architect, Jeremy Bell, had been delayed due to accidents on the journey from Oxfordshire and that he hoped to be here as soon as possible.

Paul Cubitt explained that over the last year the parish had been developing the project from the original plans drawn up by their former church architect, Terry Norton. Terry has now retired and accordingly the parish have been looking to appoint both a church architect and/or a project architect for the above works. They have approached several architects and eventually the decision was taken to employ Ruth Brennan as the church inspecting architect. Ruth will be overseeing the HLF-EH grant work. Meanwhile Jeremy Bell of JBKS Architects has been appointed to carry out the project work.

The parish has also held an open day which was attended by over 200 people including the local MP, Keith Simpson. The day included displays from a number of groups which hope to use the new facilities for outreach work. These groups include CAB, the Matthew Project, Broadland District Council and Norfolk Constabulary, as well as many local village groups. The average Sunday attendance is seventy with numbers rising at Christmas, Easter and major festivals, funerals, weddings and village events. Children's numbers are growing with seven to eight regularly attending every Sunday. This is an area which it is hoped can be developed further.

JBKS is a Christian firm which specialises in church re-ordering work. Examples of work by JBKS were displayed, including Greyfriars, Reading; St Peter and St Paul, Buckingham; St Mary's, Thame; St Mary's Wallingford; and St Mary's, Witney. The architect is very keen to work with the parish to accommodate all their needs in the best way possible. The proposals put forward by JBKS include a flying gallery which provides the facilities required but which will not impact on the worshipping space beyond. In addition, the project also includes the grading of the churchyard to allow for the west door to be used for disabled access and extending the vestry to provide a parish office.

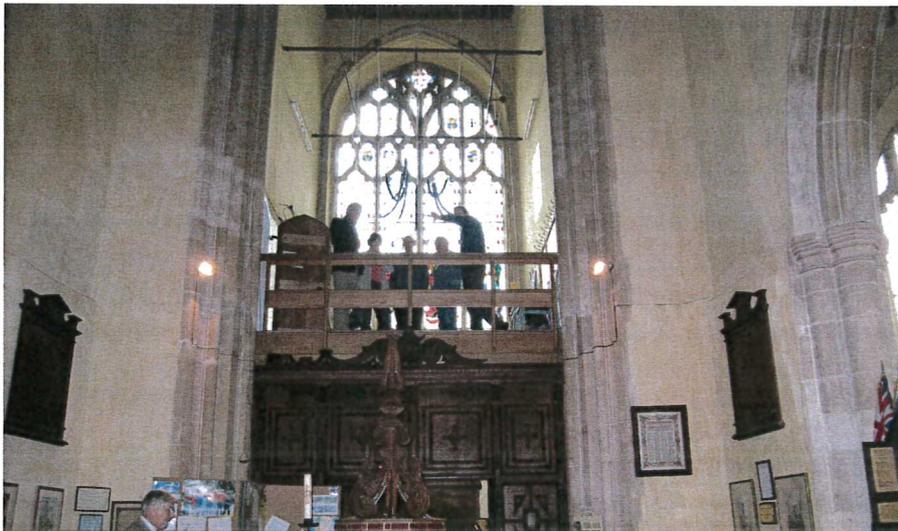
Victorian vestry to south of church



The existing wooden lobby just inside the main entrance door will be removed, and new inner glass doors installed. These will provide more light and a tighter seal into the church. The existing wooden doors will be retained and pinned back when the church is open to allow people to see into the building.

The kitchen and toilet areas will be remodelled, and an additional toilet will be provided where the flower cupboard now stands. The kitchen will be more compact and located behind folding glass doors. The gallery will be curved, floating above the existing screen rather than sitting directly on top of it. It will be as low as possible so as not to be too dominant.

The painted Georgian screen will be retained, and new glass doors inserted into the middle section to ease access for coffins, and allow people to see into the body of the church. The modern lintel of the middle section will be removed. Sound-proofed glass will be used to link the balcony with the screen, designed to prevent dust traps developing. The use of light wells within the gallery will allow it to be placed nearer to the aisle windows and bring extra light into the building. The tower screen will be glazed, with glass doors fronting the ringing chamber, and steps will lead down onto the main gallery. The gallery will be used as an upper meeting room, as a heritage display area and it will provide additional seating area for large services/concerts. The tower room will continue to be used for children's work, and the rather fine 1920s screen will be retained, although the broken top pediment will be removed to allow the new floor to be inserted. The new floor will be inserted level with the piers. The cupboards will be renewed to provide extra storage. The installation of glass doors to the ringing floor will improve acoustics for the bell ringers. The remainder of the new gallery will be open to the church. Access to the gallery will be via a new staircase in the north aisle with the existing tower stairs providing an alternative exit.



The 1920's screen and ringing gallery.

A new heating and lighting system will be installed. The new heating system will maintain the building at an ambient 10-11 degrees, and this can be boosted when the church is in use. The new meeting room will be able to be heated independently.

The main light fittings will be Italian Reggiani Narancia fittings which combine a metal halide uplighter with an LED downlighter, and these will be supplemented with Stick LED lights, LED spotlights, and LED uplighters together with recessed compact fluorescent downlighters. The positions of the lights are shown on drawing No. BLO 021 02.

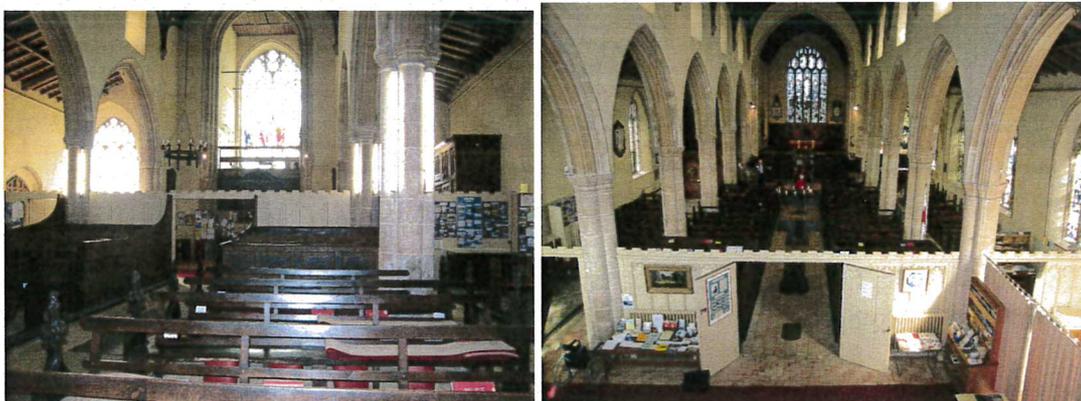
Neil Birdsall warned that it is often in the spandrels of the arches that wall paintings are found. Jeremy Bell said that no wall paintings have been identified in these positions; however, if any are found, the lighting locations would be adjusted accordingly. Lux levels have still to be finalised.

Jude Johncock asked what the rationale was behind the extension to the vestry. Paul Cubitt said that the vestry was built in 1870 and therefore it was felt that it could be easily extended. The vestry can be accessed externally which would allow people who felt uncomfortable entering the church itself to gain access to the additional community services it was hoped to offer and which were needed within the village.

Jeremy Bell explained the many issues involved in providing the parish with the facilities they need whilst at the same time not detracting from the church and the space it provides. He felt that the solution was to install a gallery which floats over the screen but is not attached to any pillars etc. The balustrade front will be narrow - 1.1 metres high only - and made from wood. Charles Carus queried whether the design could be simpler and made entirely from glass. Neil Birdsall expressed concern that the cleaning of the glass in the tower arch might present a problem. However Paul Cubitt explained that the parish would clean the glass using their own scaffold tower. Jeremy Bell said that from his experience this would not present a problem, as the glass will not need cleaning often and modern cleaning equipment will enable this to be accomplished easily by the parish.

Jude Johncock queried whether the access into the existing toilet was sufficient for wheelchairs, as she felt that the turning space was rather tight. Members of the DAC said that the parish had an opportunity to here to start afresh with the toilet facilities and urged them to do so.

There was uncertainty as to whether the Georgian screen should be retained or not and whether this should be taken as an opportunity to completely review the project. Paul Cubitt said that in 1912 the parish had obtained a faculty for its removal, but for some reason had never completed the work. He also said that he has never found any mention of the screen in a guide book on the church. Jude Johncock felt that further research was required on the provenance of the screen to establish its significance, in order to ascertain whether the screen can ever be removed or not.



The painted Georgian screen

Alan Kefford thanked the representatives of the parish for their presentation of their proposals and the members of the DAC sub-committee for their reactions and comments. He explained that the purpose of the visit was to provide the members of the sub-committee with a proper understanding of the works and their effect on the church so that the case could be accurately reported to the full committee of the DAC. He also explained that the decision whether or not to recommend the proposals to the Chancellor rested with the full committee of the DAC and could only be judged on the information contained in the application for a faculty submitted by the parish and its agents.

Caroline Rawlings
February 2012