

**St Mary & All Saints Church,
Droxford ('the Church')
Report of Archaeological
Advisor on the
opening of a Vault on the
South side of the Graveyard
on 25 November 2015**

Author: Michael Chandler

www.friendsofdroxfordchurch.org.uk



St Mary & All Saints Church, Droxford ('the Church')
Report of Archaeological Advisor on the
opening of a Vault on the South side of the Graveyard
on 25 November 2015

Overview/Summary

1. Following the survey carried out by Wessex Archaeology in August/September 2015 interest was sparked to identify any underground voids in the graveyard.
2. It was known that there was an underground vault in the graveyard to the south side of the Church and that this had last been opened in living memory, to shore up one of the capstones that had subsided.
3. The Rector, Tony Forrest, granted permission to open the vault, and this work was carried out commencing 9.30am on Wednesday 25 November 2015. Present were Gordon Hope, Stuart Attrill, Veronica Attrill, Barry Brough, Michael Collins, Ros Collins, Liz Stewart, Tony Forrest (Rector) and Michael Chandler (Archaeological Advisor).

Account of Findings

1. Work commenced with the raising of one of the capstones, which revealed steps leading down into the vault. The steps were very muddy and some of this mud was removed so that the vault could be accessed.
2. The vault was found to comprise two compartments separated by a narrow doorway (see Plan p7). It was built of red brick with a vaulted ceiling, similar in construction to that of the crypt in the Church (opened in February 2015).
3. At its highest point the ceiling is no more than 3'0", making access difficult especially to the far compartment. The dimensions of both compartments are the same, being approximately 6'6" wide and 5'6" deep.
4. The inside of the vault was damp, but not wet, with no signs of recent or historical flooding.
5. There was evidence that the vault had been disturbed at some time in the past, with human bones moved and wooden coffin fragments displaced. Photographs taken during the opening of the vault are reproduced on pages 3 – 6 of this report.
6. Objects found comprised:
 - seven complete human skeletons (laid West/East orientation), four in the far compartment and three in the near one
 - one lead coffin in the near compartment. This coffin is small and likely to have housed a child, who possibly died of smallpox (see Historical Evidence below)
 - fragments of wooden coffins, with copper alloy pin decorations (similar in size to drawing pins)
 - a small cylindrical bottle (approximately 3.0" high and 5/8" diameter) made of clear

brown glass with a metal screw lid. This contains some liquid and a solid object. The glass is slightly cracked so water could have seeped in. This bottle may have originally contained Holy Water

- part of the upper face of a leather shoe
- an escutcheon (thin metal plate similar to those found in the Church crypt) that would have been attached to one of the coffins. The escutcheon bears the inscription 'Gloria Dei'
- a number of decorated coffin handles (again, similar to those found in the Church crypt)

Of the above objects, only the escutcheon and the leather shoe part were removed from the vault.

Historical Evidence

1. Historical evidence, from a nearby Table Tomb, suggests that the coffins were interred between 1740 and the early 1750s and belonged to the Clewer (alternative spelling Cluer) family (possibly six adults and two children). It is likely that at least some of them died of smallpox. As such, the vault is of contemporary date with the Church crypt.
2. Possible occupants of the vault (information extracted from notes prepared by Gordon Hope) are:
 - from Table Tomb in Droxford graveyard, but no trace of burial in Droxford or Bishop's Waltham burial registers:
 - ❖ Occupants (i) and (ii): 07 May 1740, died, Mary (aged 15 years 10 months) and Ann (aged 7 years, 2 months, 3 weeks), daughters of John and Mary Clewer of Calcot
 - ❖ Occupant (iii): May 1751, died, Elizabeth (aged 23 years), daughter of the late John and Mary Clewer of Calcot
 - name not on Table Tomb and no separate grave in Droxford graveyard identified (as yet):
 - ❖ Occupant (iv): 17 November 1742 (from Bishop's Waltham burial register transcript), Mr John Clewer of Calcot buried at Droxford (Droxford burial register entry is damaged)
 - from Droxford Burial Records:
 - ❖ Occupant (v): 22 March 1749/50, buried at Droxford, Mrs Mary Duckitt

(formerly Clewer), aged 52 (she had died 16 March 1749/50)

- ❖ Occupant (vi): 28 July 1752, buried at Droxford, Edwin Clewer (aged 21 years 7 months), son of the late John and Mary Clewer (he died on 25 July 1752)
- ❖ Occupant (vii): 29 August 1752, buried at Droxford, Edward Clewer ("of Botleigh"), aged 26, son of the late John and Mary Clewer (he died on 26 August 1752)

Blessing by the Rector

Once the examination of the vault had been completed the Rector gave a blessing, following which the capstones were replaced

Photographs



1



2



3



4



5

6



7



8



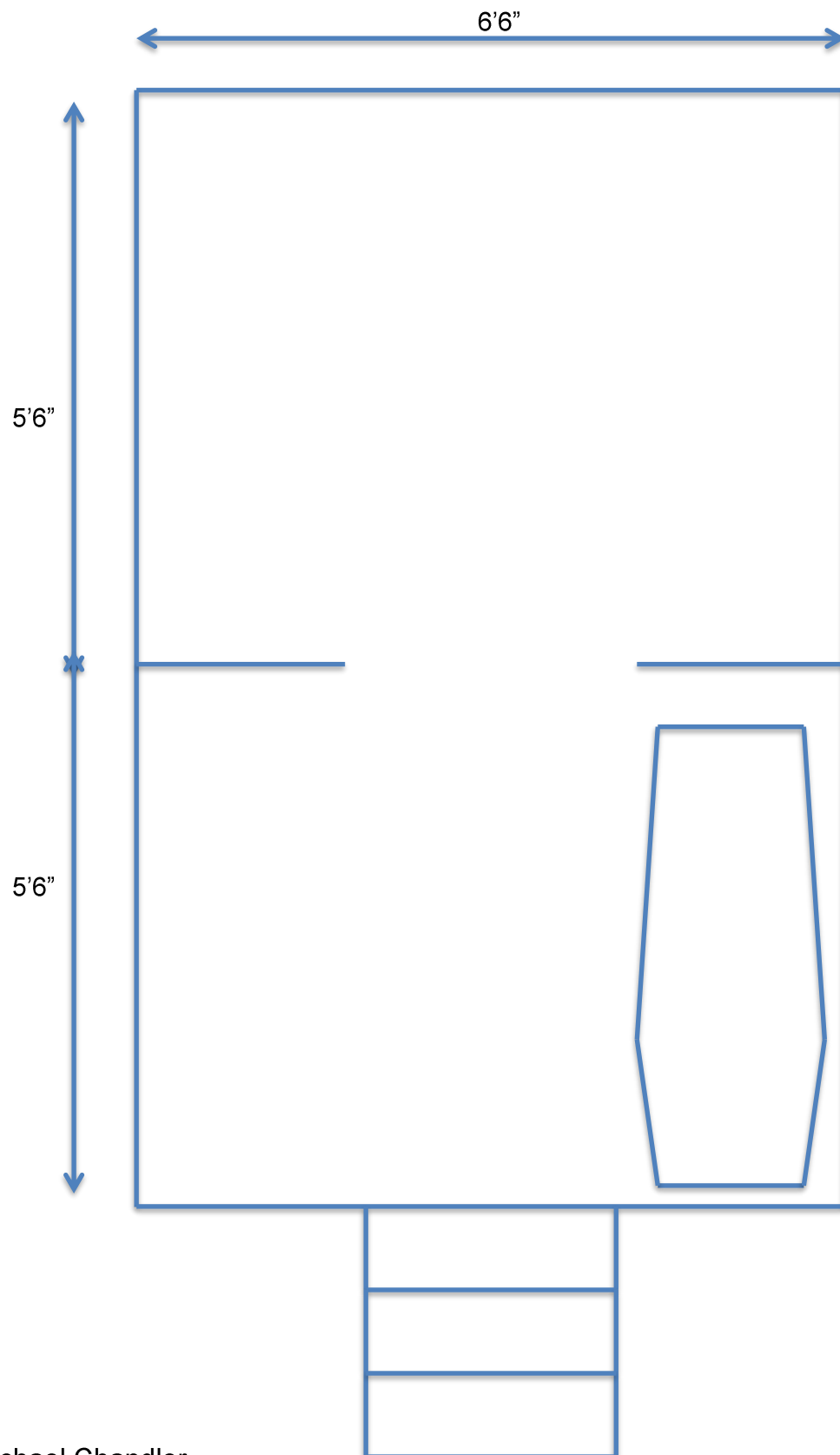
9



10



Plan of the Vault



Michael Chandler
Archaeological Advisor to the Friends of Droxford Church