

# **Re-opening of the Crypt in the North Chapel, Droxford Church**

## **24 February 2015**

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Work commenced with the raising of the capstone (an inverted gravestone). The space above the steps leading down to the entrance to the Crypt was filled up to floor level with rubble and this was carefully excavated and removed, revealing the steps. No objects of any archaeological significance or associated with Droxford Church were found in the rubble.

Once the rubble had been removed the block wall was revealed and this was also carefully dismantled and removed.

The Crypt itself was then revealed, being approximately seven feet wide by seven feet deep and five feet high at its highest point. It is built of red brick with a vaulted ceiling.

Three coffins were found laid in an east/west orientation. Two of these were positioned face-up whilst the third, nearest the north wall, was on its side. All three coffins appeared to be made from lead. The coffins were positioned on two brick plinths laid in a north/south orientation on the floor of the Crypt.

A number of iron handles and escutcheons were found associated with the coffins, together with the plaque, as referred to in the Hampshire Chronicle article of 01 June 1973. Attached to the back of some of the iron handles were remnants of wood, which may indicate that the lead coffins were originally placed in wooden cases to which the handles were attached. It is thought that the Crypt has at times in the past been flooded and it is quite conceivable that the wooden outer cases would have largely rotted away as a result.

On three of the walls of the Crypt small shelves made of plaster had been attached, probably intended to hold candles. In two of these coins were found (a 1971 2pence piece and a 1971 1pence piece): presumably left there by the workmen in 1973.

The remains of the rubble on the floor of the Crypt between the coffins was cleared, revealing several more iron handles. Finally, a large piece of marine plywood was placed over the entrance to the Crypt at floor level and weighted down with heavy stones, to ensure that the area would be safe and secure pending a decision as to what further action will be taken with regard to the Crypt.

All artefacts removed from the Crypt have been stored carefully pending further examination. It was not possible to look inside the coffins and the appropriate authorities will be consulted as to how to proceed with regard to the examination of the coffins and their contents.