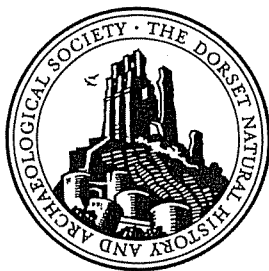


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# East Stoke: The Old Church of St Mary

IAN HEWITT, BRONWEN RUSSELL and HARRY MANLEY

## Background

The 'Old Church' project has been a shared initiative between the School of Conservation Sciences at Bournemouth University and the East Stoke Heritage and Archaeological Group led by Barry Quinn. Financial support for the project has been derived from a Heritage Lottery Initiative.

Interest in the now-ruined parish church of St Mary in East Stoke parish was first prompted by Sara Grayson in 2000 and the site was visited by Iain Hewitt (Bournemouth University) the following year. The Old Church of St Mary has thus been named in order to distinguish it from the nearby nineteenth-century church of St Mary the Virgin just a short distance away in the same parish (Figure 1). This report records a programme of assessment and re-evaluation of the site of the Old Church that focuses upon its history and the steps taken to record important elements of the

standing remains. A simultaneous programme of non-intrusive archaeological work has also taken place and a report upon the results of this will be made available in 2010.

## Location

East Stoke (as it is now known) is a dispersed settlement that is situated towards the south-west of the Civil Parish of East Stoke in the Purbeck District of Dorset. Henceforth, in the interests of clarity, the prefix 'East' will be used only with reference to the parish. For reasons stated below, the settlement name will be given as 'Stoke'. In cases where a quoted source is ambivalent, parentheses will be applied thus: (East) Stoke.

Stoke is approximately 2.6km west of Wareham and 1.2km east of Wool. In recent times Stoke has become synonymous with the associated settlement of Stokeford

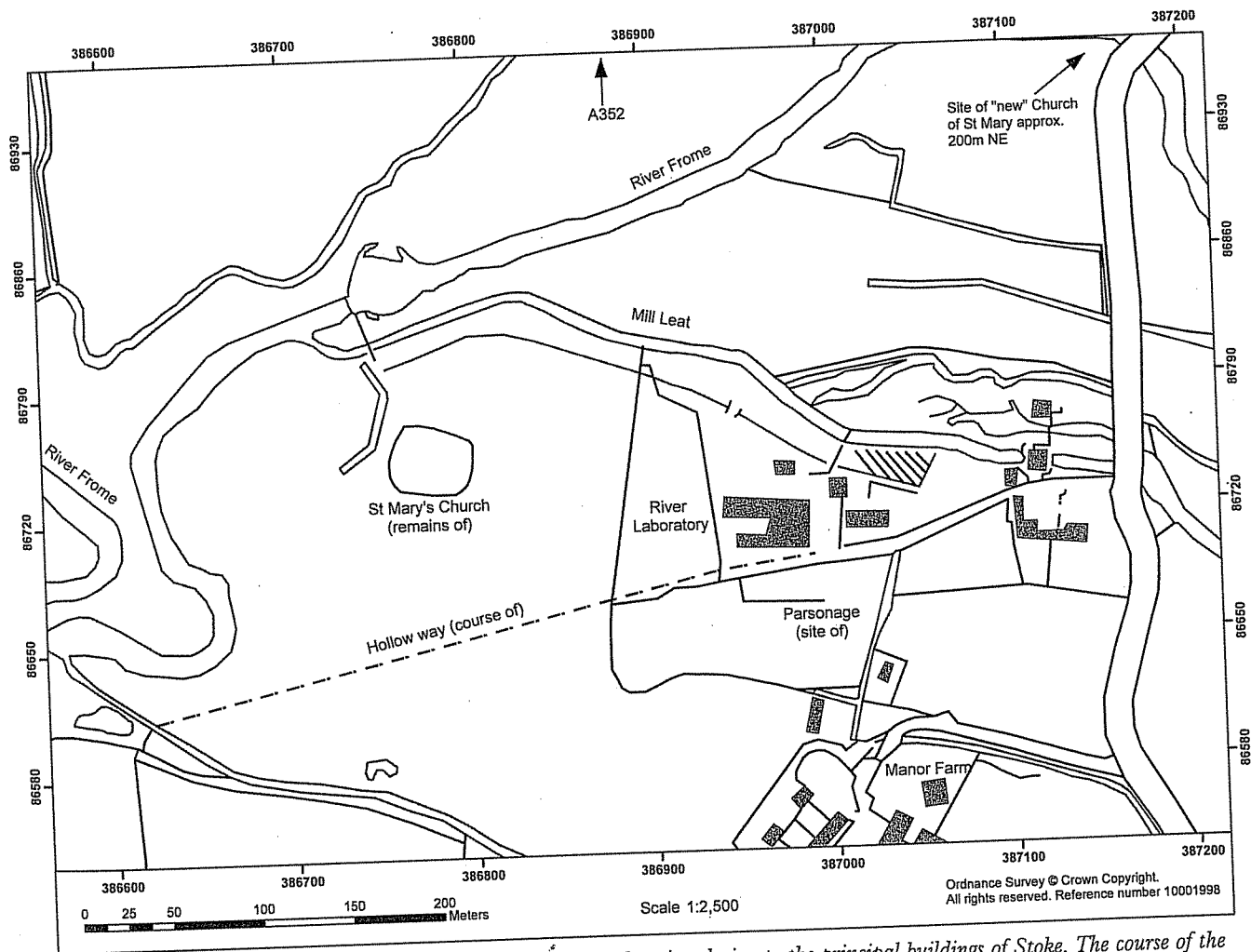


Figure 1: Map showing the location of the Old Church of St Mary in relation to the principal buildings of Stoke. The course of the medieval hollow way is shown as a dashed line

which straggles along the A352 (see Figure 3). At Stokeford, on the south side of the A352 (NGR 387250 087100), stands the early nineteenth-century church of St Mary the Virgin, immediately beyond which a minor road crosses the Poole to Weymouth railway, and bridges the River Frome (Figure 1). It is at this point that one enters the forgotten settlement of Stoke where the site of the Old Church can be found, 300m north-west of Manor Farm.

### Geology and Land Use

The remains of the Old Church are in Stoke Meadow the soils of which are alluvial by reason of it being adjacent to the south bank of the River Frome. However, the underlying geology is Bagshot Beds and Heathstone, sometimes known as Carstone (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England (RCHME) 1970, 274), a material that is frequently used as a local building material and one which is evident in the remaining structure of the Old Church. Within living memory the meadow has not been ploughed but it has been maintained as grassland for cattle grazing. To the south and north patches of residual heathland are in evidence.

### Status

The Old Church and churchyard together comprise Scheduled Ancient Monument 29087, Batch no. 10748, 1999 (County no. 580). The surviving church fabric and gravestones are Listed Grade II. In addition, the graveyard is a common registered as CL 266 (Legg 1995, 20). A number of important references to the Old Church are contained within the Dorset County Council Sites and Monuments Record 6011 (now the Historic Environment Record). These sources and others were re-examined by Whittle (2003), a process that revealed a number of inconsistencies and ambiguities in the written record.

### Place-name

The Place-name element '*stoke*' has been explained by Mills as deriving from the Old English *stoc* meaning 'outlying farm building, or secondary settlement' (1998, 137). The prefix 'east' is first recorded in 1316 as '*Estok*' and Mills suggests that this might have been a reference to the relative location of the settlement to Bindon Abbey. This hypothesis is plausible but strained. Mills notes that '*East Stoak*' was applied in 1664 (*ibid.*) but the cartographer John Speed used just '*Stoke*' alongside a settlement symbol on his map of Dorset dated 1610 (Nicolson and Hawkyard 1995, 71). It was still '*Stoke*' to Thomas Gerard in the 1620s (Legg 1980, 70) and also to William Seale in 1732 on his *Map of Dorsetshire* (Beaton 2001, 40–41). Furthermore, the Ordnance Survey Second Edition map of 1890–91 has the principle buildings of the settlement as Stoke Farm

(now Manor Farm), and Stoke Mill and there is a Stoke Common (south-south-east), Stokeford Farm (north), and Stokeford Cottage (north-west). The tithe map of 1844 confirms that the Old Church stands in Stoke Meadow (Dorset County Council, D1/LX33/2).

From this brief survey it is obvious that the settlement place-name had not been fixed as 'East Stoke' as late as 1732, or even 1890. It is conceivable that the names 'Stoke' and 'East Stoke' were interchangeable, but one should also consider that they represent an important distinction between parish and settlement in a similar way to 'Sixpenny Handley' and 'Handley' in the District of East Dorset. Hinton and Webster's proposed model for medieval parishes in southeast Dorset has a detached portion of East Stoke immediately to the east of Wareham that included Bestwall and Swineham Farm (1988, 52; Keen 1984, 220). If Hinton and Webster's proposal is accepted then the place-name 'East Stoke' might refer to the portion of the parish east of Wareham but which, by virtue of association, also came to be applied to the larger parcel of the parish on the west side of the town. Hinton and Webster argue that the combined portions of East Stoke could have constituted part of the *parochia* of the Saxon minster of St Mary's, Wareham (1988, 50–53). Assuming an early date of origin for the Old Church it is perhaps for this reason that it shares the dedication of its mother church.

### The settlement of Stoke

In relatively close proximity to the Old Church were Manor (Stoke) Farm (387000 086600), Stoke Mill (387000 086700) and the Old Parsonage (387000 086670). The fate of the Old Church will be discussed in detail below. Of the others, Manor Farmhouse has been replaced on the same site by a post-1945 successor. According to RCHME the earlier building was of eighteenth-century date (1970, 276). The mill has gone too, and now a river laboratory occupies part of the site. Fortunately, Her Majesty's Commissioners visited the mill prior to demolition and produced a ground floor plan (RCHME 1970, 276). The mill seems to have been a popular subject for artists and a number of perspectives have survived in various forms, including a postcard.

The Old Parsonage has been demolished and the plot, once glebe land, remains empty. The history of this building is of particular interest because of its close spatial and functional relationship with the Old Church. According to Taggart (*c.* 1939, 9–10) the Parsonage was formerly the Rectory or Glebe House, and he indicates that a scrap of paper found in one of the Parish Registers records that its last clerical occupant was Rev. Benjamin Moyse, curate-in-charge of the Parish in 1808. RCHME (1970, 276) suggests that the Parsonage was built in the seventeenth century. A relatively poor photograph of the house survives as a single

page from a sale catalogue that shows features that are similar to, but not entirely consistent with the plans of the building as depicted by the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 County map of 1889. In the sale catalogue the Old Parsonage is described as two cottages ideal for conversion into a weekend or country residence (Dorset County Council, Ph 915).

### Medieval records

(East) Stoke is mentioned in the Domesday Book (c. 1086). It is listed under the holdings of Count Robert of Mortain, half brother of William I (Tillyard 2002, 40–2). The entry is worth quoting in full:

*Stoke. Edmer held it before 1066. It paid tax for 2 hides. Land for 2 ploughs, which are there, in lordship; 2 slaves; 2 villagers and 3 smallholders with 1 plough. A mill which pays 15 shillings; meadow, 20 acres; pasture 5 furlongs long as wide. The value was and is 50 shillings (Morris, 1983).*

It should be stressed that the Domesday Book was primarily a tax assessment document and its entries have limited value as an indicator of settlement location and topographical detail. In fact, Domesday describes eleventh-century estates and land holdings rather than individual settlements and there can be no guarantee that these in any way equate to the modern settlement landscape. Nevertheless, the Domesday details for (East) Stoke do have a familiar ring. One can imagine the eleventh-century plough lands of the estate on the alluvial soils of the Frome valley but set back from the river to avoid flooding. The meadow, and perhaps the pasture, would have occupied riverside locations. The mill must have been situated on the River Frome, perhaps on or close to the site of its post-medieval successor (but see reservations to this notion below). Overall, the Domesday Book portrays a landscape that has dispersed characteristics and there is no topographical evidence to suggest that Stoke ever developed into a formal village thereafter.

### Architectural evidence

No church is mentioned in Domesday Book but this cannot be taken as evidence that there was not one at Stoke in 1086; a chapel dependent on a mother church could have escaped the attention of the Domesday commissioners. The removal of stone from the Old Church after 1828 has left little in the way of worked architectural fragments and this makes it difficult to date the development of the building with certainty. The standing remains, notably the south porch, suggest a date range of 15th to 16th centuries (RCHME 1970, 274) but the foundations of the nave and chancel could be earlier, and it is possible that later modifications have obscured the true date of origin. The medieval font has survived but it is now in St Brendan's Episcopal Church, Franklin's Park, Pennsylvania, USA

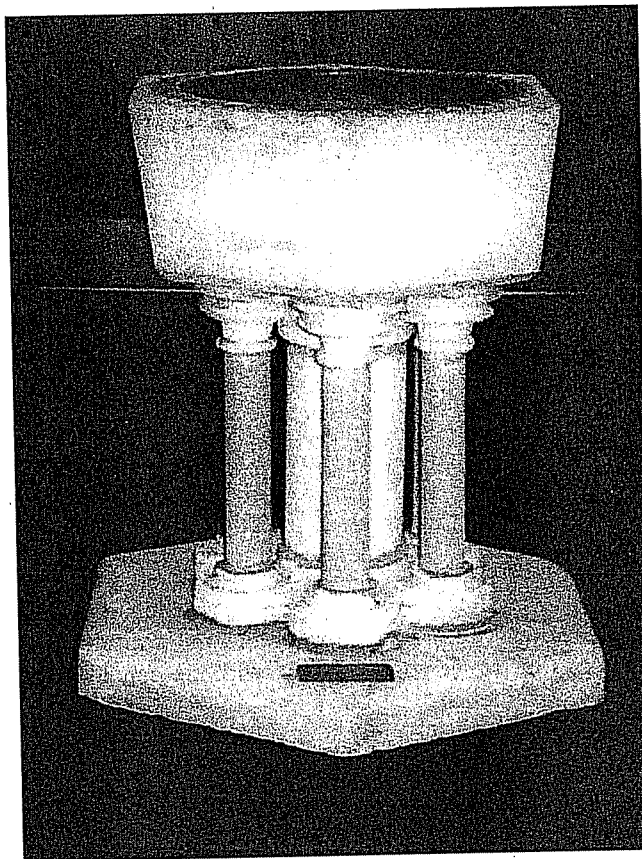


Figure 2: The thirteenth-century font from St Mary's Old Church as seen at St Brendan's Episcopal Church, Franklin's Park, Pennsylvania, USA (Sara Grayson)

(Figure 2). A brass plaque is attached to the base of the font which reads:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD  
THIS ANCIENT FONT BOWL FROM THE  
OLD CHURCH  
WAS RESTORED AND THE NEW SHAFT  
CARVED  
AND PRESENTED TO THIS CHURCH OF ST  
MARY  
BY O.A. HODGSON, M.A. RECTOR. 1885

It is not clear whether the font was transferred immediately from the Old Church to the new church of St Mary the Virgin upon the de consecration of the former in 1828, but it seems probable that it was in a poor state of repair by 1885 when it was 'restored'. It is this font that was described as thirteenth-century by Her Majesty's Commissioners in 1970 (274; see also Newman and Pevsner 1972, 197). The date of the font may indicate that the original construction of the Old Church can be pushed back to the thirteenth-century, although caution must be exercised because fonts are portable items and this one might have been introduced to St Mary's Old Church from another church of earlier date. The recent history of the Old Church font is a reminder of the transferability of these fittings. However, the date of the font is consistent with the date

that the Old Church was first recorded: in the Sarum Registers of 1306 (Hutchins 1861, 422).

### The decision to replace St Mary's Old Church

The story of the demise and replacement of the Old Church of St Mary can be traced to 1825 when the Churchwardens' accounts record a decision to build a new church on the north side of the River Frome (Dorset County Council PE/ESK: CW 1/1 MIC/R/1543). This represented a dramatic change in arrangements because the Old Church stood on the south side of the river. In correspondence dated March 1828 (Dorset County Council, D/BOH: E49) the Rector, Charles Fox, gave four reasons for this break in tradition:

- i The church stood in water meadows (Stoke Meadow) that were low and damp. When, occasionally, these meadows were flooded, it made the church inaccessible to persons on foot without considerable inconvenience.
- ii The fabric of the church stood in need of considerable repairs.
- iii The church was too small, being capable of accommodating only 140 persons out of a population of 500, and increasing.

- vi It would be more convenient if the church was located on the north side of the river near the high road (i.e. the Wareham Trust Turnpike road now known as the A352).

All of these claims can be substantiated, but it is worth examining the evidence in greater detail.

The landscape around Stoke is a palimpsest of dry and flooded water courses, drains, cuts and water meadows that are visible from the air and detectable on the ground. Successive episodes of water management must have had a considerable impact upon settlement buildings including the Old Church. The now demolished Stoke Mill was built c. 1820 but the channel that delivered water to the undershot wheel was cut at an earlier date (RCHME 1970, 276) since it is shown as being extant on Edgar's map of (East) Stoke dated 1732 (Dorset County Council, D/KAT/: P3; see above). This artificial channel begins as a spur off the River Frome at a point c. 150m north-west of the Old Church, and extends eastwards to the mill, eventually to rejoin the natural course of the River (Figure 3). Schemes such as this would have changed the character of Stoke Meadow. A site that had been suitable for a church in the thirteenth century or earlier was transformed into a watery landscape when the meadows were drowned. It is very probable that dampness was responsible for



Map of Manor of East Stoke surveyed for Geo Strode by J. Edgar, 1732  
DRO ref: D/KAT:/P3. Copyright of Dorset Records Office, Dorset County Council

Figure 3: A tracing from a map of 1732 by J. Edgar on behalf of George Strode (Dorset County Council, D/KAT:/P3). The arrow marks the course of the mill leat in 1732. The position of the old churchyard is marked by a cross

some of the necessary repairs to the church fabric as alluded to by Fox.

Rev. Charles Fox had been rector of East Stoke since 1819 (Taggart *c.* 1939, 15) and was resident at Mapperton, near Bridport (Dorset County Council, D/BOH: E49). The replacement of the Old Church was certainly planned by the sixth year of his office, but preliminary discussions with the *grande*es of the community and the Church are likely to have originated earlier than 1825. Probably, it was a pet personal project and it is interesting to note that the start of Fox's incumbency closely coincided with the passing of an *Act for Building and Promoting the Building of Additional Churches in Populous Parishes, 1818* (Port 2006, 37–43) which established the Church Building Commission. The same year saw the formation of the Incorporated Society for Promoting the Enlargement and Building of Churches and Chapels, known as the Church Building Society. As a result of these developments, the building or re-building of parish churches rose from 57 between 1816–20, to 178 in the period 1826–30 (Gilbert 1976, 130). The early nineteenth-century census returns for East Stoke confirm the population growth alleged by Fox, there having been 318 recorded individuals in the parish in 1801 rising to 519 by 1821 (Page 1975, 267). In part at least, the increased population of East Stoke can be attributed to developments in agriculture. One indicator of this trend is evidence for the enclosure of Stokeford Heath between 1792 and 1813 (Dorset County Council, D/BOH: E43). More land was being brought into production providing new opportunities for settlement and employment.

### Settlement drift

Settlement drift away from the traditional centre of Stoke, as represented by the Old Church, Manor Farm, Parsonage and Stoke Mill, must have been triggered by changes to the network of principal road routes in the parish. According to Good (1966, 139) the ancient road from Wareham (westwards) to Stoke (and onwards to Wool) would have been via Rushton (388000 086500). A large section of this road is represented by a public bridleway that follows the north bank of the River Frome and it is unlikely that it provided convenient access to Stoke, which lies on the south side of the river. A better route would have been the one that runs south of the Frome from Stoborough via East Holme and West Holme. Today it is a minor road that is variously known as Holme Lane (east) or Bindon Lane (west), connecting the sites of the former religious houses of Holme Priory and Bindon Abbey. However, even this road did not pass directly through Stoke and in order to solve this problem, a spur route existed that ran from Stoke Mill to a point on Bindon Lane at 386100 088400. This is still a public footpath that is represented by a hollow way approximately 100m south of the Old Church (Figure 1).

This arrangement of traditional routes was disrupted when the Wareham Turnpike Trust was established in 1765–6 (Good 1966, 138). Amongst its projects the Trust upgraded a new stretch of road from the market cross in Wareham through Stokeford and on to Wool (*ibid.* 139). This new route did not pass through Stoke but it is probable that the scheme included bridging the Frome at Stokeford in order to provide access to the church and settlement. The convenience of the new turnpike road (now the A352) is self-evident because it provided a more direct route to markets at Wareham and Woolbridge (Owen 1756, 29). For travellers, Stokeford became an important point of convergence and it is not surprising that it was the location of choice for a new church once the decision had been made to replace the old one.

Overall the case for replacing the Old Church must have been compelling. It was too small, too damp, expensive to maintain and, by the 1760s, off the beaten track.

### The process of replacement

Once the decision had been made to replace the Old Church, steps had to be taken to identify a new site, secure the necessary funds, obtain the blessing of the Diocese of Bristol, and to appoint an architect. The Churchwardens' Accounts provide a useful insight into the development and eventual fulfilment of the project but they probably disguise much of the wrangling that went on in the background (Dorset County Council PE/ESK: CW 1/1 MIC/R/1543). The Accounts record the establishment, in 1827, of a project committee that comprised Rev. Charles Fox, Rev. William Bullen (curate), Nathaniel Bond Esq., and four parishioners: J. Garland, S. White, G. Smith and J. Seymour (*ibid.*).

In order to qualify for a grant, it was required that the parish should provide the site (Port 2006, 232) and this was identified at Stokeford on the south side of the turnpike road on a plot of land owned by Nathaniel Bond (Whittle 2003, 68). There was clearly some urgency to get the new church up and running because the Faculty obtained from the Diocese in 1828 allowed for the taking down of the Old Church so that the materials might be used in the building of the new church, that was to be commenced without delay (Dorset County Council PE/ESK: CW 1/1 MIC/R/1543). In the interim, Mr Smith offered the use of the storeroom adjoining Stoke Mill as a place of worship, subject to the grant of Faculty (Taggart *c.* 1939, 7). Funds had been obtained for the building project, largely from the pockets of private individuals, but including a Parish Rate and a grant from the Incorporated Society for the Enlargement of Churches (Dorset County Council D/BOH: E49).

The project brief allowed for a building that was not to exceed £1,400 in cost and stipulated that the new church was to accommodate 450 persons, three times the capacity of the Old Church, the whole to be

completed within nine months of the undertaking. T.E. Owen of Portsmouth was appointed as architect and builder (Taggart *c.* 1939, 6; Lambeth Palace Library 2009). Apparently, the new church of St Mary the Virgin was opened for worship by Special Licence in January 1829 (*ibid.*, 7). Taggart (*ibid.*, 8) indicates that the new church did not include a chancel in the first instance. The best explanation for this omission would have been an urgent need to cut costs within a tight budget and completion schedule. However, the architect's plan indicates that a chancel was to have been present at the outset, albeit in diminutive form (Lambeth Palace Library 2009). The apparent haste to demolish the Old Church in order to provide material for the building of its successor may be a further indicator of financial constraint. Eventually, a new larger chancel was built in 1885, the same year in which the medieval font was restored at the expense of Rector Hodgson (see above).

### The demolition and abandonment of the Old Church

The grant of Faculty to demolish and replace the Old Church (Dorset County Council PE/ESK: CW 1/1 MIC/R/1543) was a broad statement of intent. The extent to which materials were re-used in the fabric of the new church was not recorded and no thorough building survey of the Church of St Mary the Virgin has been carried out to date. Such a survey might now prove difficult because St Mary the Virgin itself became redundant in 1985 (Whittle 2003, 2) and it has been converted into residential units.

Evidence from some former medieval parish churches (e.g. Otterbourne, Hampshire) demonstrates that the use of their churchyards continued for some years after the demise of the church. In such cases, the chancel frequently continued in use as a cemetery chapel after the rest of the building had been reduced to ground level (Hinton 1991, 73–89). The thorough destruction of the East Stoke chancel argues that the use of the graveyard ceased with the de-consecration of the church in 1828, an assertion that is supported by evidence from the graveyard itself (see below).

### Fixtures and fittings

The medieval font aside, RCHME (1970, 274) identified four other fixtures and fittings that had been transferred from the Old Church to the new:

- 2 × eighteenth-century coffin stools; and
- Monument to Sarah (Reynolds), wife of Thomas Witt of Woolbridge, 1814, and Thomas Witt, 1824.

The fourth item was one of two bells mounted in the tower of the new church. It was inscribed *William Lockier church warden Clement Tosiear cast me in the year 1698*. According to Dalton (2000, 262), who inspected it when *in situ* in the the 'new' church of St Mary the

Virgin, this was a strange-sounding tenor bell. The tombstone of a William *Lockyer* (deceased 1699) is one of those that have survived in the graveyard of the Old Church near to the south porch amongst those of the worthies of East Stoke (Feature 5). It is virtually certain that both inscriptions refer to the same individual (Table 1). After 1985, the Lockier/Tosiear bell was put in storage at Salisbury, where it still awaited a new home in 1998 (*ibid.*, 262).

### Architectural fragments and building plan

In 1861 Hutchins described the medieval church of St Mary as '... a small building which included a nave, chancel and tower' (422). The surviving ruins of the Old Church of St Mary stand off-centre (north-west) within a sub-rectangular churchyard that measures *c.* 40m east/west by 20m. The approximate dimensions of the church were 20m east/west by 10m. The standing fabric amounts to a section of the south wall that stands to *c.* 2.5m in height and a substantial portion of the south porch to a maximum of *c.* 1.5m tall. A drawing in Taggart shows the arch of the fifteenth-century porch as complete and standing (*c.* 1939, 6). Likewise, a Gothic window aperture is visible in the section of the south wall adjacent to the porch, though apparently with no vestige of tracery. RCHME (1970, 274) claims that both the porch arch and the remaining south window fell between 1948 and 1963. The RCHME site description (*ibid.*, 274–5) also identifies a small quatrefoil window (now lost) and a stoup on the internal east wall of the porch (present). The same source mentions a scratch (or mass) dial on the southeast external wall surface of the porch. The mass dial has survived (Figure 4) although as a consequence of the density of the vegetation, Le Pard (1998) failed to find it (or indeed the porch) during his survey of Dorset medieval 'sundials'.

The nave, tower and chancel of the Old Church are collectively represented by a shallow scoop along their combined length and width. First impressions are that this is a quarry ditch from which flooring materials have been removed during demolition in 1828–9. However, this is unlikely to be the case because the whole of the churchyard appears to be situated upon a low knoll, an artificial feature that has been created by successive generations of burial. According to a model proposed by Morris, as burials accumulated the level of a churchyard rose whilst the floor of the church remained relatively constant and therefore at a lower level to that of the ground outside (1989, 241 Figure 65 and 320). If the church was suffering from dampness by the 1820s then here was another contributory cause. Alternatively, and at an unknown date, the floor level might have been lowered deliberately in order to enhance the impression of height and space within the church. Whatever the case, it should be noted that the floor of the south porch seems to be level with the surface of the graveyard, which would have made it necessary to step down

from the porch when entering the nave. There is no evidence to indicate that the level of the porch floor was ever raised to make good any difference with the progressive rise in the level of the churchyard. This curious drop in levels between porch and nave fuels the suspicion that the porch is a relatively late addition, since it merely abuts the surviving section of south wall rather than being 'bonded in' as one might expect.

Another feature of the porch is that it is constructed of limestone ashlar blocks that would be worthy of a higher status building than a small rural parish church (Figure 4). Given their quality, it is equally strange that the building materials from the porch were not incorporated into the new church of St Mary the Virgin. Child (2007, 96) describes the parish church porch as 'the heart of village life'. It was the place where the first part of the marriage ceremony was carried out, it was linked to the service of baptism and a place where promises or deals were solemnised. The presence of the stoup within the porch at of the Old Church underlines the pivotal role of the porch within the community. Perhaps it was for this reason that it remained substantially intact, including its mass dial, when the rest of the church was demolished in 1828.

### The churchyard

The Old Church group of headstones contains some fine examples of late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century work. These are concentrated to the south-west of the churchyard, apparently lining a path that led to the porch. Being the earliest examples of marked graves at the site, they occupy the coveted space on the south side of the church. Of particular note is the 1730 headstone to Spicer (Feature 1). At the other end of the scale, but also on the south side of the church, is a simple stone to WN 1675. If the date is correct, then it is the earliest visible member of the group. The latest burial to be commemorated is dated 1822 to Chisman of East Holme Farm and this is in the unfavoured area to the north of the church. East Holme, a separate parish, had no church of its own from 1715 until 1866 (RCHME 1970, 132) and conceivably this north side of the Old Church graveyard was set aside for East Holme parishioners. If so, then this would have added to the crowding of burial space which must have been at a premium. There is no record of graveyard crowding being given as a reason to relocate the church.

There are three graves that are marked by chest tombs (Lees 2000, 55-72). One of these is close to the entrance to the porch, the other two are on the north side of the church close to the stone of Chisman. They are all in such a state of disrepair that the subject of their dedications is a matter for speculation. However, one of the northern chest tombs was constructed of brick which is relatively rare (Lees 2000, 132).

### Conservation issues

The present state of the churchyard and the remaining fabric of the Old Church give cause for considerable concern. Clearly there is a desperate need for a management plan for the site that must include the preservation and conservation of the surviving church and churchyard features in addition to appropriate interpretation of the monument. No less important is the imperative need to protect the delicate ecology of the site and to secure its future as a haven for biodiversity (Greenoak 1985). Selective clearance of encroaching tree saplings was undertaken by Dorset County Council's Conservation Ranger team and this has enhanced the biodiversity of the site. However, photographs of the site taken over the past fifty years by members of the East Stoke community have demonstrated that the graveyard monuments have succumbed to much wear and tear. It was therefore thought fit to make these a priority for attention by recording their form and inscriptions as a future historical resource. Manual transcription, photography and laser scanning have been applied and it is the last of these that is explained and illustrated below.

### Laser scanning methodology

Laser scanning required that the gravestones were as close to vertical as possible. However, in a number of cases, such as the three headstones of the Burden family on the west side of the churchyard, these memorials were in various states of disarray. It was therefore necessary to apply for Scheduled Monument Consent in order to correct the alignments prior to commencing the scanning process.

Scanning of the gravestones was undertaken using a Konica-Minolta VI 900 laser scanner fitted with an 8mm wide angle lens. The scanner was positioned vertically at ground level approximately 0.5m from the gravestone face. A series of overlapping scans were then collected until the entire gravestone surface had been had been recorded. To control ambient light levels, all scanning was undertaken beneath a temporary shelter.

The individual scans were post-processed using *Polygon Editing Tool v2.02*. Extraneous data was removed and small holes in the data were filled manually. This usually occurred when moss on the gravestones detracted the laser, thus creating areas of 'no-data'. Individual scans were then registered and merged into one complete composite scan for the entire gravestones. The typical error average and Sigma was 0.08-0.11 and 0.10-0.14 respectively. The composite scans were then exported into *Paintshop Pro v7* for final minor editing and cropping.

### Results

The results of the scanning technique are illustrated overleaf. Each monument appears in Site Feature order



Features: Scanned images (all copyright of Bournemouth University)



Feature 1



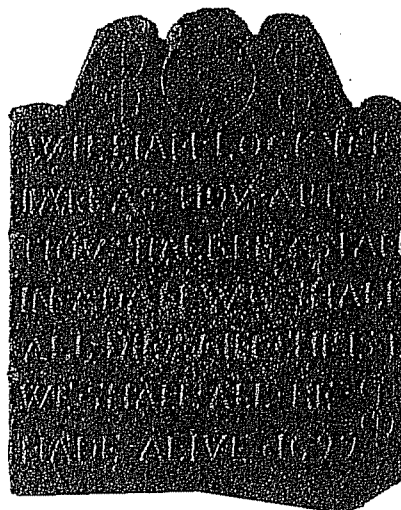
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Feature 3

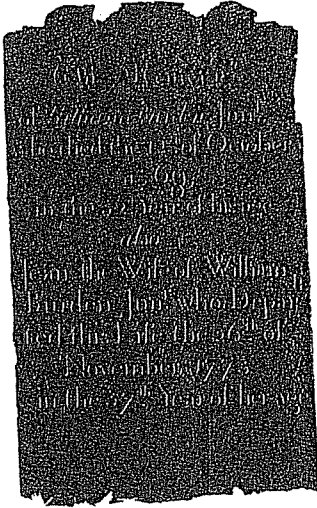


Feature 4



Feature 5

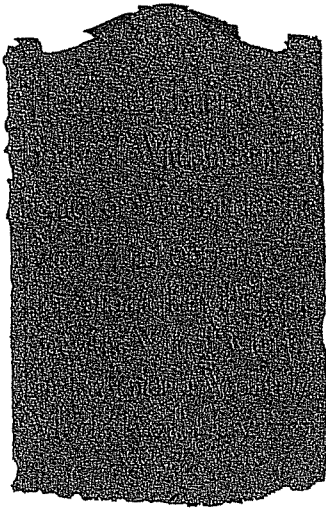
Features: Scanned images (all copyright of Bournemouth University)



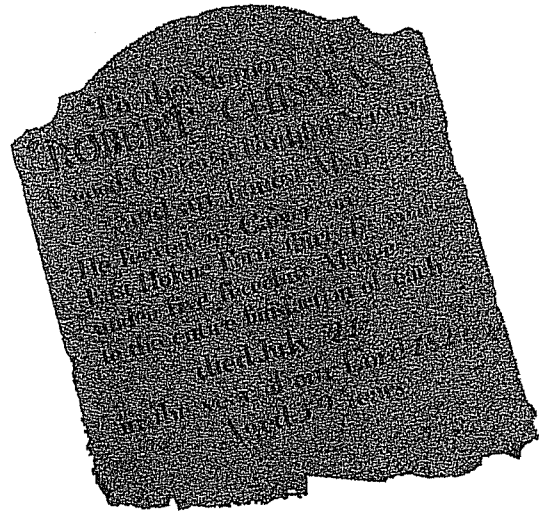
Feature 25



Feature 26



Feature 27



Feature 34



Feature 36

**Table 1:** East Stoke Graveyard Survey

Feature	Details	Laser scan image
1	Headstone at west end of churchyard. Leans to the west. Inscription reads: August 16 1728 then/Died Joan Spicer wife of/William Spicer being aged 83/November 10 1730 then/Died William Spicer the/Elder being aged 73 yr	Yes
2	Headstone at south-west end of churchyard. Inscription reads: Here/lieth the b/ody of Jane/the wife of/Alexander Lumber who/ Dyed March/4th An. Do 1711	Yes
3	Headstone at south-west end of churchyard. Inscription reads: Here lieth/the body of/ Richard Smith/Son of Richard/Smith who dyed/the 23 day of Sep/1698	Yes
4	Headstone at south-west end of churchyard. Inscription reads: Here lyeth the Body/of Sturton Dawe/Gent of this parish/who dyed June the/7th day An. D. (1704)	Yes
5	Headstone at south-west end of churchyard. Inscription reads: William Lockyer/I am (was) as thov art/(T)how shalt be as I am/In Adam we shall/All die in Christ/We shall all be/Made alive/1699	Yes
25	Headstone situated on the east side of the churchyard. Corrected to perpendicular 21.5.2008. Inscription reads: In memory of/William Burden Junr/Who died the 12th October/1768/In the 52nd year of his age/also/Jean the wife of William/Burden Junr who Depar/ted this life the 26th of/November 1773/In the 57th year of her age	Yes
26	Headstone situated on the east side of the churchyard. Inscription indistinct but the scanning process has revealed: In Memory/of Charles Burden/who Departed this/Life 13th January 1788/Aged 50 years.	Yes
27	Headstone situated on the east side of the churchyard. Corrected to perpendicular 21.5.2008. Inscription reads: Here Lieth Buried ye/Body of William Burden/Senior of Woolbridge. He/Died ye 5th October 1747 Agd 72 Here also Lieth the Body of/Mary the Wife of William/Burden senior of Woolbridge/Who died ye 28th July 1757/Aged 79(ne) years	Yes
34	Headstone situated immediately to the north of F32 and F33. Inscription reads: To the Memory of/Robert Chisman/Good Carter and faithful Servant/and an honest Man/He served as a Carter on/East Holme Farm thirty six years/under five successive Masters/to the entire satisfaction of each/died July 21/In the Year of our Lord 1822	Yes
36	Headstone situated to the east of the churchyard. Inscription reads: In memory of/Mary Plowman widow/who died 26 of Jan 1758/Aged 78 years/A pious Christian lieth here/A virtuous wife and mother dear/Who patiently affliction bore/But now is blest for evermore/ All you my friends as you pass by/As you are now [so] once was I/As I am now . . . fo(r ever?) . . .	Yes

and these can be cross-referenced to the Feature numbers and transcription data in Table 1.

### Conclusions

The need to correct the alignment of a number of the gravestones prior to scanning revealed that these were not set at a depth exceeding 0.4m, usually less. This made the stones vulnerable to toppling and it is possible that some lie buried. The slabs of the three known chest tombs have all been removed from their bases since the 1960s. Three broken slabs have been identified but at present their original position cannot be ascertained. They were not included in the present scanning process. Also omitted were the small standing gravestone to WN 1675 and a monument to Charles Batten (buried 1689) for both had become lost within the reasserting undergrowth.

In a number of instances, the scanned images have helped to clarify gravestone inscriptions, and in particular that of Mary Plowman (Feature 36) which is of poor quality limestone and therefore vulnerable to weathering near to the base.

All of the recorded images now can be used for exhibitions and replicas. This has provided a focus for the project as a whole, which has attracted a strong local following and reawakened interest in the remains of the Old Church and in the history of the community as a whole. The funded project concludes in 2009 but the potential for further work is considerable.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the landowner, Malcolm Barnes whose co-operation

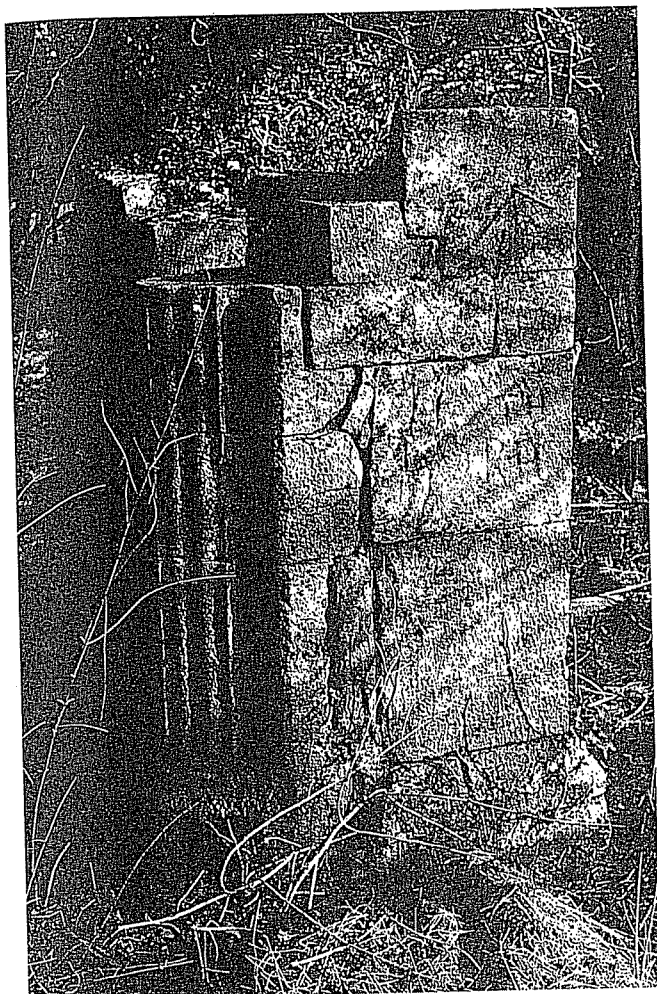


Figure 4: The south-east corner of the porch of the Old Church. The ashlar blocks of this section have been cut in a curious fashion that suggests that the porch was re-assembled here after being removed from a previous site. The mass dial is 'scratched' upon the uppermost surviving stone (Iain Hewitt)

is much appreciated. Imperative to the success of the project was the contribution of Barry Quinn and Sara Grayson of the East Stoke Heritage and Archaeological Group who have inspired and organised throughout. Steven Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council) and Duncan Coe (formerly of English Heritage) gave much valuable support in the initial stages of the project. Danny Alder, Paul Jones and Will Holland facilitated the initial management of the churchyard vegetation. Many others at Bournemouth University have contributed too, including Dr Kate Welham and former students Leila Whittle, David Stewart and Fiona Jackson.

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\*Contextual evidence indicates that this volume was written in 1939 or soon afterwards.