

Re-ordering St Peter's Church Baylham

For more than 20 years the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Peter's, Baylham has been discussing re-ordering the church and installing a toilet and kitchen area. We have succeeded and the work is at last completed.



After a couple of years of fundraising and filling in grants applications, the PCC finally had enough money to start. The PCC's Architect had drawn up plans to install an equal access toilet and kitchenette in the north transept, the area behind the organ which was being used as the vestry. The plan was to lower the raised floor and then build the toilet on the east side and the kitchen on the west.

Heronbuild began the work in July 2016 and it was due to be completed by the end of October. You may remember that a few weeks after the work started when the builders removed the wooden floor, a crypt was found.



This turned out to be a vault for the family of Nathaniel Acton, who was Lord of the Manor of Baylham in the 18th century. We knew there was a burial vault in the church belonging to this family but were unsure of its exact location. The vault has 13 'ovens', 5 of which are 'occupied'. Each of these has a sealed headstone, and they are for: Nathaniel Acton himself who died in 1795, his first

wife Caroline who died in 1761 aged only 29; three of their children who died young, between 1756-1760; Nathaniel's second wife Dorothy who died in 1805 and his youngest daughter Caroline who died in 1838 and the last to be buried in the vault.



We do not know exactly when the crypt was built but most likely in the early-mid 1760's. The north and south transepts of the church were added in 1870 and the floor boards look as if they were replaced in the early 20th century, so the vault has not been seen for about 100 years. It is apparently quite unusual to find such a fine vault in a small country church such as Baylham.

As a result of finding the crypt we had to close the church during this time for health and safety reasons, but we were able to continue to hold services. During the months the church was closed and the excitement of finding the crypt we held some open afternoons for people to come to see it. These were very popular and well attended.



After nearly a year of discussion on how to proceed and with new plans in place, it was decided to leave the vault intact and build the kitchenette on top of it with the floor of the west side to be lowered and the toilet to be built there, to enable equal access. Work began again in June 2017.



The work progressed well apart from a few little hiccups and was completed before Christmas. The organ was replaced in February and the furniture put in the tower, which will be used as the vestry. The church is now open again, so please come along to see the finished work and to maybe use the new facilities.

The PCC are planning to hold some heritage events over the next year to show some more information about the church and the crypt. So please look out for details over the next few months. We are also thinking about other uses and activities for the church now that we have a toilet and kitchen. Starting with the heritage events already mentioned, but also, talks and workshops on wildlife in the church and the churchyard, day retreats, group meetings, etc. If you know of a group that would like to use the church we would like to hear from you.

We would especially like to thank everyone who has attended and helped with our fundraising events over the last few years and also the following for giving us grants and donations towards the work:

Asda	£50	
Alfred Williams	£5,500	
Allchurches Trust	£1,500	
Foyle Foundation	£5,000	
Friends of Baylham Church	£20,000	
Ganzoni Trust	£2,000	
Garfield Weston	£7,500	
National Churches Trust	£5,000	
Mid Suffolk District Council	£500	
Suffolk Historic Churches	£3,000	
Viridor	£23,122	
Fundraising and donations from friends, visitors and parishioners		£1,185

If you would like more information about the work and the village, please see the village website <http://baylham.onesuffolk.net/>