



**The Chapels Royal of St Peter ad Vincula and St John the Evangelist
HM Tower of London**

Dear friends,

Debbie is away this week on holiday and so this week's Newsletter has been made up in advance of her going away. We hope that she enjoys a well-deserved holiday. I shall be preaching at St Saviour's Pimlico on the 20th of November for their Patronal Festival and leaving you in the trusty hands of Cortland. Please put the 27th of November in your diary as this is Advent Sunday – with a service of carols and readings. I am delighted the Arts Scholars Livery Company will be joining us at this service.

With my best wishes thoughts and prayers for you all, Roger.

Sunday Service Details 20th November 2022

The Sunday next before Advent

0915 Holy Communion St Peter ad Vincula

1100 Holy Communion St Peter ad Vincula

Readings

Col 1: 13-30

John 6: 5-14

Collect for the Sunday next before Advent

STIR up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people;
that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works,
may of thee be plenteously rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury on Sunday 11th December 2022 at 1100am

On Sunday 11th December, the Archbishop of Canterbury will be our preacher. His visit would originally have been the finale of our 2022 Platinum Jubilee celebrations. We are delighted that the Archbishop is coming to join us. After the service, there will be an opportunity to meet and chat with him over mulled wine. Do put the date in your diary.

Poem of the week

The owl and the Pussy-Cat is one of my favourite poems. I have read it to my children and grandchildren, and it always puts a smile on my face. I recall it as one of the first poems I was ever introduced to at school. Taken more seriously, Lear mocks the 'happy-ever-after' love stories that he never shared in.

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
" O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?"
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-Tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

" Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
and hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

Edward Lear 1812 - 1888

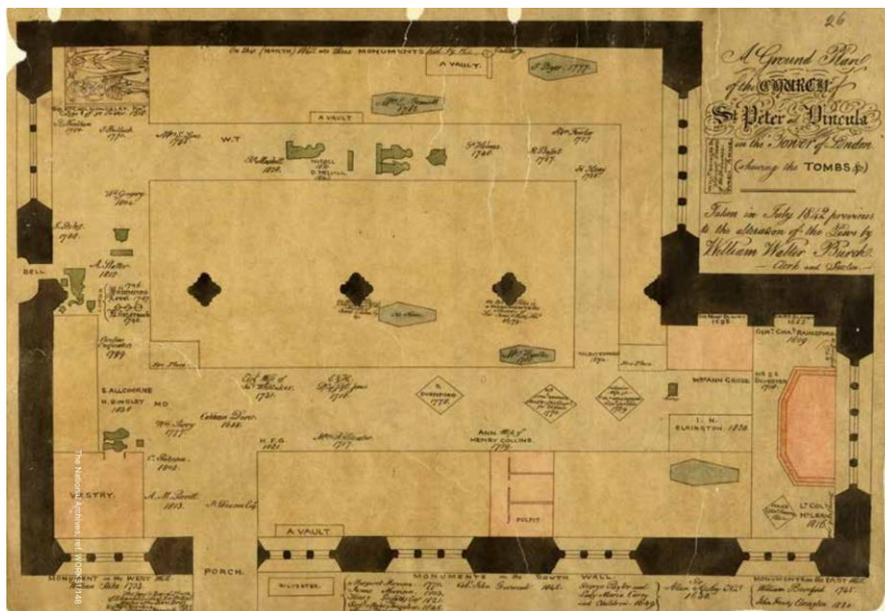


Article about the Chapel in Tudor Places Magazine

The Many Roles of the Chapel Royal of Saint Peter ad Vincula.

Please find at the end of this Newsletter a copy of this article about the roles of the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, written by HRP's Assistant Curator Alfred Hawkins.

The article has lots of interesting pictures of the Chapel – including this ground plan of the chapel in 1842 prior to the Victorian alterations.



Jigsaw

The Council Chamber in the King's House – <https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=15ff18013eeb>



Prayers

Please continue to remember those on our sick list, some of whom are very ill, amongst whom we name: Deborah, Heather, Pat, Mark, Madeleine, Vivienne, Judy, Dan, Derek, Ann, Peter, Izzy, Colin, Tom Thorne and Florence Marchbank-Ward.

RIP

Jim Cross

Please continue to pray for Ukraine:

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine today.

We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.

We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow, that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.

We pray for those with power over war or peace,

for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions.

Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,

that you would hold and protect them.

We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of peace. Amen

With best wishes, Roger.



Canon Roger J Hall MBE
Deputy Priest in Ordinary to HM The King
HM Tower of London
07908 413045
Roger.Hall@hrp.org.uk
Twitter @RogerHall53

The Many Roles of the Chapel Royal of Saint Peter ad Vincula

The Chapel is perhaps most well-known by history lovers as the final resting place of the Tudor queens and nobles who met a gruesome death within the Tower of London. However, this is just one of its numerous and varied functions. **Alfred Hawkins** explores the fascinating history of this chapel which has served, and continues to serve, the Tower's diverse community over the centuries.

What do you see when you think of the Tower of London? Usually the answer to that question is a macabre, forbidding place of imprisonment, torture and execution. Undoubtedly this image is deserved, as these are certainly important facets of the Tower's history and key functions of its use – particularly in the Tudor period. Each of us know the harrowing stories of individuals such as Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard and Lady Jane Grey,

which indelibly mark the popular perception of life within England's most famous fortress. Indeed, the re-invention of these stories in the Victorian period played a key role in the preservation of the fortress as a visitor attraction and solidified the site's position within our national memory. However, these events, and the deaths they often represent, are not the norm. Rather, they are punctuation in an equally fascinating story; that of the Tower as a living, evolving – and occasionally even cheerful – space.





The spiritual heart of a fortress

There is no building within the fortress to which this contradiction of perception and reality is more applicable than the Chapel of Saint Peter ad Vincula. One of two Chapel Royals and Royal Peculiars within the fortress, the other being the remarkable eleventh century Chapel of Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Peter's is situated within the Inner Ward, to the north-west of the White Tower. Built between 1519 and 1520, Saint Peter's is, in and of itself, an extraordinary survival. However, the history of this intimate chapel is usually perceived through a small number of internments whose stories are infamous or tragic in equal measure. While these stories are important, the history of Saint Peter's extends far beyond them. For over 500 years Saint Peter's has

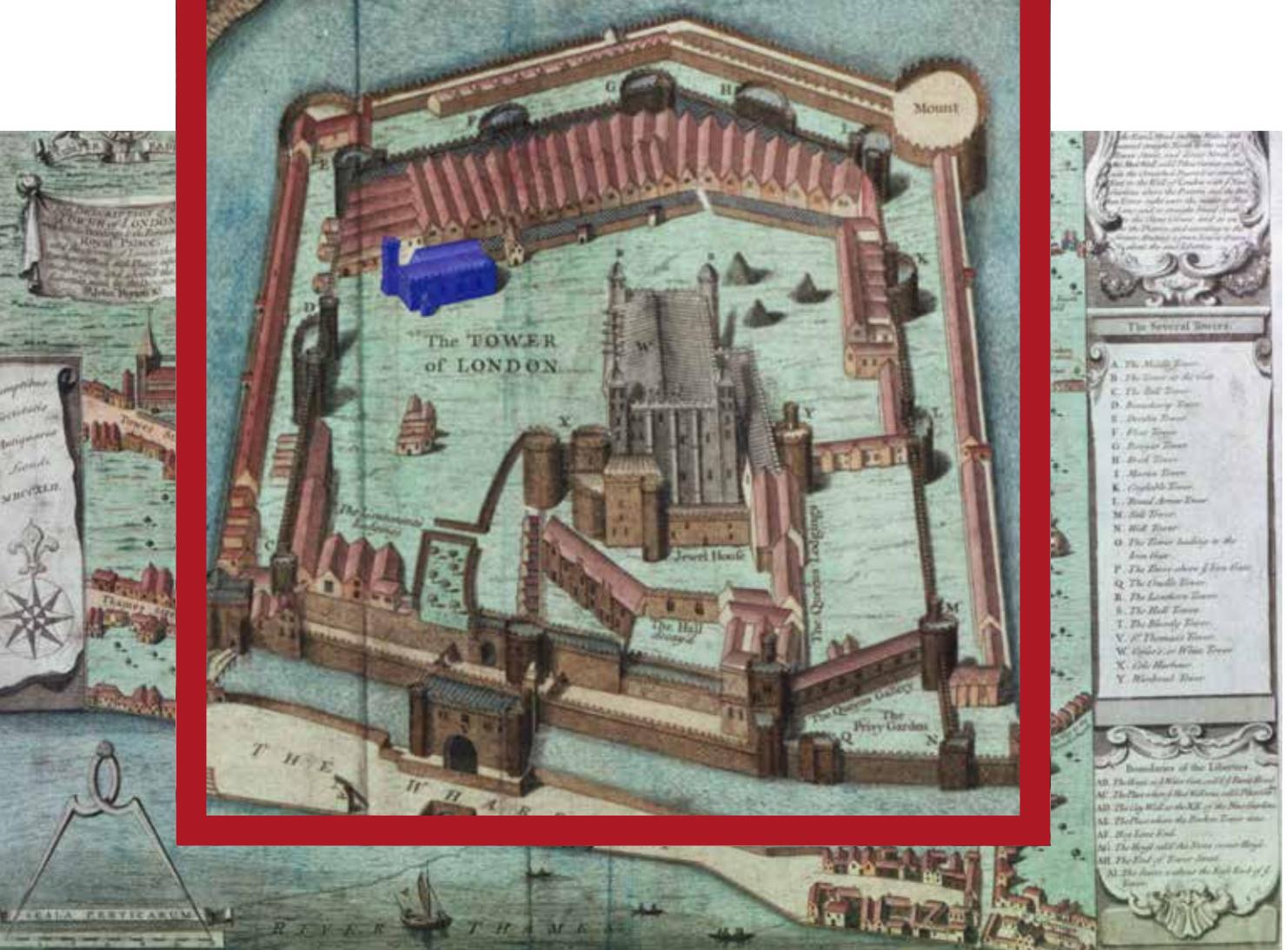
Left: The Chapel Royal and Royal Peculiar of Saint Peter ad Vincula looking north from Tower Green.

Above: The interior of the Chapel Royal and Royal Peculiar of Saint Peter ad Vincula, looking east to the altar in the chancel.

been the parish church for the Tower's large and diverse community. Today it remains an active place of worship hosting regular services, baptisms and marriages. It is, in essence, the spiritual heart of a fortress known primarily as a place of terror.

The true origins of Saint Peter's

The location of Saint Peter's within the Inner Ward of the Tower is, without doubt, the reason for the building's survival. As part of the fortress, it is often assumed that the history of Saint Peter's starts in 1078 with the construction of the White Tower. This, however, is not the case. In fact, Saint Peter's origins can be found within a church likely dating to the ninth century. Unfortunately, there is no archaeological record for this building, though its existence is inferred through records of ecclesiastical litigation. While we are unable to make any definite assertions concerning its form or location, it is likely that this building was located to



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the north of the current chapel outside the initial fortifications built by William the Conqueror.

In the twelfth century, Henry I demolished the ninth century chapel as part of his works to expand the fortress westwards and re-built a new chapel outside the enlarged fortress, though again no descriptions survive. It was not until the reign of Henry III in the thirteenth century, when new innermost defensive walls were erected, that this chapel would be subsumed into the fortress. Records from this period show the sumptuous decoration commissioned by Henry III for the chapel, quite in contrast to the lime-washed interior of the current building, including painted beams depicting the Crucifixion, the Virgin Mary and St John alongside 'handsome' stalls for himself and Eleanor of Provence.

This iteration of Saint Peter's would subsequently be demolished by Edward I during his extensive works to expand the fortress into a concentric castle – creating the layout of the Tower which largely remains today. Following this, a new chapel was built between 1286 and 1287, at a cost of £317 8s 3d, which would remain in use for 225 years until it was lost in a catastrophic fire in 1512. Although no descriptions survive, it is likely to have been decorated in much the same manner as the previous building.

A parish church within the Tower

The use of the Tower in the early sixteenth century was largely as a store, foundry, mint and garrison. It is therefore best thought of, at this point, as a small town on the edge of the City of London. Following the fire of 1512, this community of craftspeople, soldiers and administrators was without a place of worship – Saint John's in the White Tower being used as a store since 1320. Subsequently, under the direction of Sir Richard Cholmondley, then Lieutenant of the Tower, Walter Forster, Comptroller of the King's Works, set about building what is described as a 'parish church within the Tower' between 1519 and 1520 at a cost of £260.

While there is certainly some ex-situ reused medieval masonry within Saint Peter's, typical of any works of this period, much of the building dates to this phase of construction. The main body of the building forms the nave leading to the chancel where the memorial pavement commemorating royal internments is located. To the north, separated by masonry arches primary to the building's construction, is a nave aisle which houses the organ, which dates from 1699, and provides access to the private vestry and crypt.

Above: A true and exact draught of the Tower Liberties, survey'd in the year 1597, showing Saint Peter's highlighted in blue.

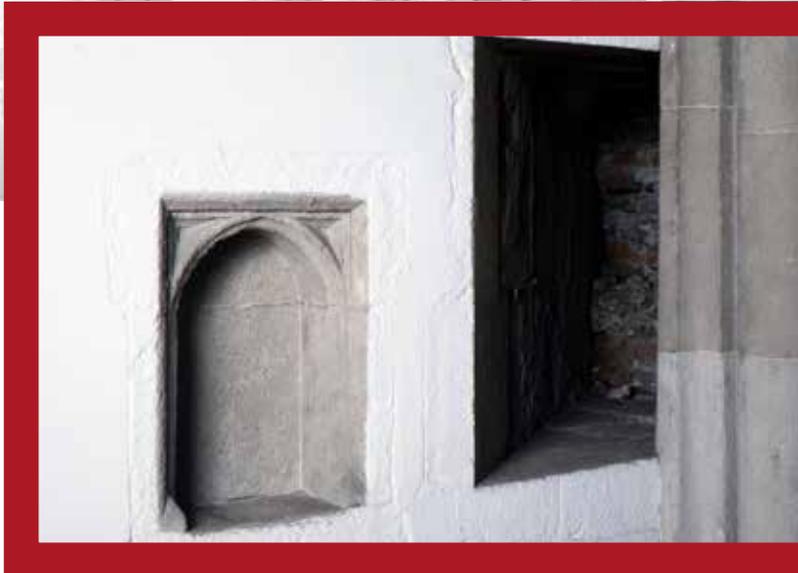


The former was built in the nineteenth century and the latter is formed of a Tudor Board of Ordnance basement which has been repurposed. This basement is the sole surviving remnant of storehouses built in the early sixteenth century to the north and east of the chapel which can be seen in the 1597 Haiward Gascoyne plan of the Tower. The chapel is lit by tracery windows which are Tudor in style, though it appears that a number of these have been replaced.

One of the most spectacular features of the chapel is the exposed Tudor timber ceiling. A popular myth is that the roof was built using Spanish chestnut so that Katharine of Aragon could pray beneath the trees of her homeland. This paints an enticing picture and is certainly plausible as Henry VIII is known to have portrayed his affections through architecture. Unfortunately, the origin of the timber has not been proven and the reason for its choice was not documented. Irrespective of the truthfulness of this myth, however, the ceiling is one of the most important survivals within the chapel.

Above: The masonry arches and timber roof of Saint Peters from the north aisle, both of which are primary to the construction of the building in 1519-1520, looking south west.

Right: The Tudor piscina and hagioscope in the eastern elevation of the north aisle.



A story told through architecture

Other interesting architectural features give us some insight into the early history of the building. For instance, a piscina and hagioscope, or squint, are located at the eastern end of the north aisle. The former, a stone basin to drain water used in Mass, and the latter, an opening in the wall allowing the altar to be visible from the north aisle, are distinctive of Catholic or pre-Reformation churches and are certainly primary to the construction of the chapel prior to the split with Rome in 1534. Unlike the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace which was, and continues to be, opulently decorated, we cannot make any assertions of the Catholic chapel's interior decoration – although it is unlikely to have simply been lime-washed, as



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it is today. Following its construction, the only major alteration to the chapel in the sixteenth century was in 1559 when a porch was added to the southern elevation of the building. The porch was built in line with the entrance of the Queen's House, constructed as the Lieutenant's lodgings in 1540, and survived until the nineteenth century.

A number of sixteenth century monuments are held within the chapel. The largest and most complex of these is the Blount memorial which occupies the northern elevation of the chancel. Dating from 1564, the monument is largely formed of four niches containing figurative sculptures representing Sir Richard Blount and his son, Sir Michael Blount – both of whom were Lieutenants of the Tower. It is often said that one of the skulls located within the niches of the monument is real - disappointingly however - they are both finely carved stone. Another of the chapel's sixteenth century monuments is the

Above: The Blount Memorial, dating from 1564, on the northern elevation of the chancel, commemorates Sir Richard Blount and his son, Sir Michael, who were both Lieutenants of the Tower during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603).

alabaster tomb of Sir Richard Cholmondley, who oversaw the chapel's construction, and his wife, Elizabeth. Even though it is an incredibly fine tomb, it was never used for Cholmondley's interment. Rather, it was used to hide the chapel's late medieval font during either the Dissolution of the Monasteries or the Protectorate in the seventeenth century. The font was re-discovered in 1876 when the tomb was opened, and it has subsequently been conserved and regained its rightful place as a functional part of the chapel's paraphernalia.

Right: The early 16th century Cholmondley monument, located between the nave and the aisle. Sir Richard Cholmondeley (c1460-1521) was Lieutenant of the Tower from 1513 to 1520. He created this very fine tomb for himself and his wife, but he was not buried here. His finally resting place remains unknown.



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Right: The burial entry for Sir Thomas Arundell in 1552.

A mausoleum for traitors?

It would be impossible to describe the Tudor history of the chapel without some discussion of its internments. Both Thomas More and John Fisher, now venerated as saints of the Catholic Church, were interred in Saint Peter's in 1535 followed by many other notable individuals including Queen Anne Boleyn and her brother George, Viscount Rochford (1536), Sir Thomas Cromwell (1540), Queen Catherine Howard (1542), Thomas Seymour (1549) and the 'Nine Days Queen', Lady Jane Grey, and her husband, Lord Guilford Dudley (1554). As I have mentioned, however, while these individuals, and their stories, are incredibly important – we should not categorise the building's history solely through their eyes.

In this regard, Saint Peter's holds a truly extraordinary survival – its Register of Burials, Baptisms and Marriages dating from 1550, 1580 and 1587 respectively until 1821. These records, compiled from numerous documents and by no means complete, paint an entirely different picture of the chapel. Through these records, the idea of a mausoleum for the great and good is wholly replaced by a representation of the community the chapel cared for. Burials, baptisms and marriages of administrators, craftspeople, soldiers and residents outnumber prisoners in the order of thousands, showing the chapel not as a place of misery but a representation of English life in microcosm and above all – a place of faith.

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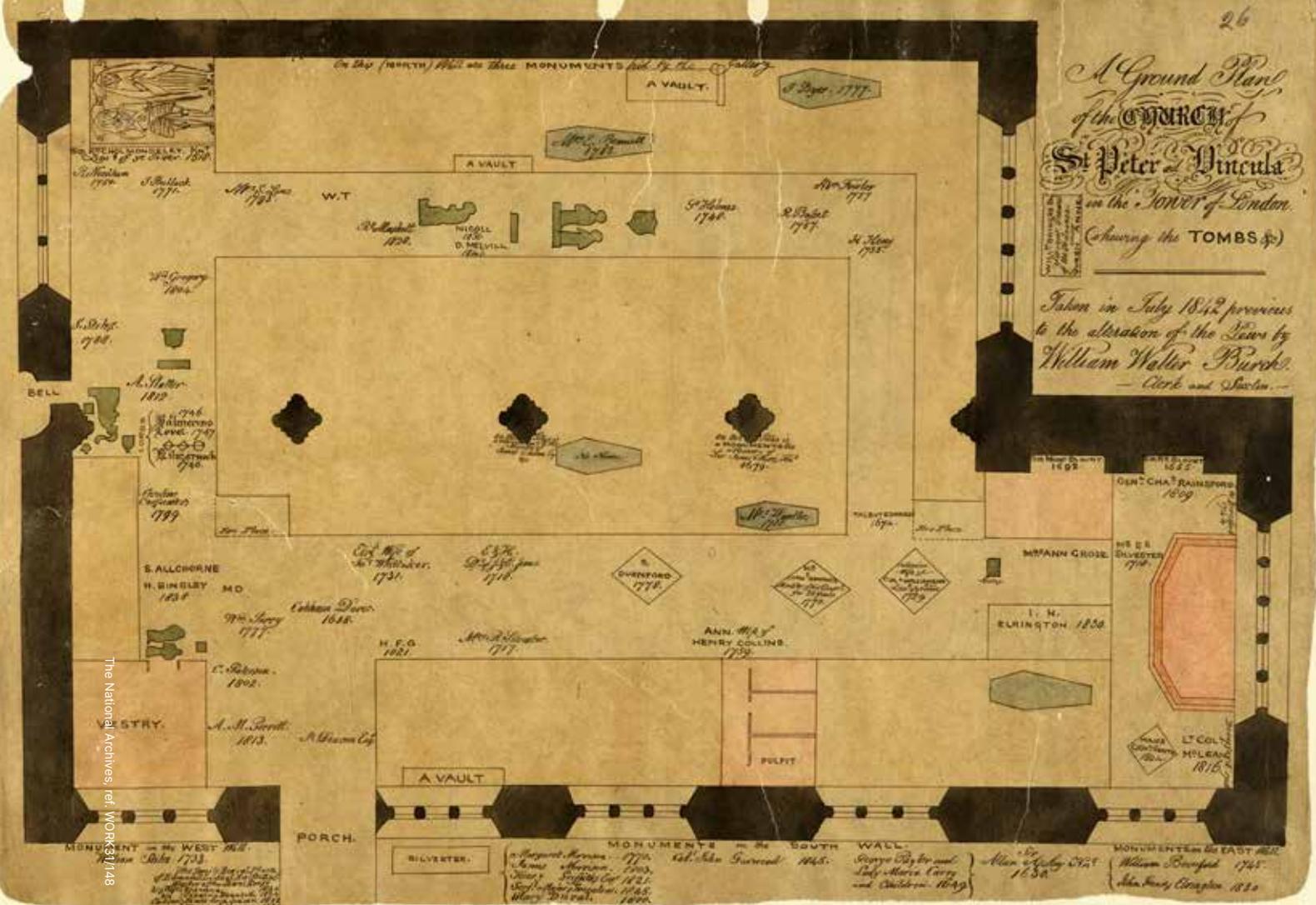


Above: An entry into the Chapel's register for the baptism of Sir Walter Raleigh's son, Carew Raleigh, in 1605.

Naturally, these records include prisoners such as Sir Thomas Arundell, executed in 1552, and, in some cases the children of prisoners - as in the case of Carew Raleigh, the son of Sir Walter Raleigh, baptised in 1605 after being conceived during Walter's imprisonment within the Bloody Tower. More often than not, these records provide an insight into the lives of individuals associated with the various institutions of the Tower. Notably, later entries include records of the baptism of Black and Asian individuals, including Charles Kennyston (1639), John Swan (1675) and Francis Chalcey (1675). Both John and Francis are described as 'black servant[s]' and while much of the detail of these individuals' histories are lost to us, the entries allow us to paint a more accurate picture of the Tower community as a whole - showing us that the community that the chapel served was as diverse as other neighbourhoods within London.



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The National Archives, ref: WO/31/148

Given the thousands of internments of individuals who simply lived, worked and died at the Tower, it is perhaps unsurprising that it is not only within the walls of the chapel where these individuals are buried. In order to facilitate the quantity of burials which are documented, it was necessary for Saint Peter's to possess a large extramural burial ground. Archaeological evidence and a number of plans of the Tower dating to the nineteenth century shows this burial ground as spanning a large proportion of Tower Green and the Parade Ground. This is supported by various accounts, including one which states in 1597, that *'Ther is not within the Tower anie place sufficient for their burialls'* and later sources stating that, within the Tower, *'Any flat stone you tread on is a grave stone'*. The use of the Tower burial ground lasted until 1821, although by this point the quantity of internments within the chapel would have far reaching consequences for the building.

Victorian renovations

During the nineteenth century the architects Anthony Salvin and John Taylor were charged with the remedievalisation of the Tower – a process which saw the demolition and removal of many important buildings. The chapel was not excluded from this process and, in 1862, Anthony Salvin demolished the

Elizabethan porch on the south side of the building, re-opening the original entrance on the western elevation and removed a later lath and plaster ceiling within the chapel, enabling the Tudor roof timbers to be seen once more. This, however, did not satisfy the chaplain who, in 1865, raised concerns about the general state of disrepair within the building, including the movement of the floor owing to the large number of internments.

As such, in 1876, the Office of Works, under the supervision of John Taylor and the antiquary Doyné Courtenay Bell, undertook additional works to restore the building. It appears that the façade of the building and the bell tower were at least partially rebuilt, however the most intrusive process was the excavation of the chapel's interior to re-stabilise the floor. Almost all of Saint Peter's internal burials were completely exhumed and relocated to the crypt, though some appear to have been left in-situ. Initially, it was hoped that these works would not extend to the chancel – the holiest part of the chapel, and the most probable location of any royal internments. However, it soon became clear that this work would need to be undertaken.

Above: A ground plan of the chapel in 1842 prior to the Victorian alterations.

Fortunately, many documents were made during this process. The positions of those individuals who were ‘identified’ during the excavation are well documented – although the positions of re-internments are limited to only a small number of individuals presumed to be members of the royal family including Queen Anne Boleyn; Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury; Jane Boleyn, Lady Rochford; Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset; John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland; and James, Duke of Monmouth. The most interesting of these documents is that concerning the exhumation of a skeleton presumed to be that of Anne Boleyn.

“The pavement was then lifted [...] and the earth removed to a depth of two feet: it had certainly not been disturbed for upwards of a hundred years. At this depth the bones of a female were found not lying in the original order, [...]: all these bones were examined by Dr Mouat, who at once pronounced them to be those of a female between 25 and 35 years of age, of a delicate frame of body, and who had certainly been of slender and perfect proportions. The forehead and lower jaw were small and especially well formed. The vertebrae were particularly small, especially one joint (the atlas) which was that next to the skull and they bore witness to the Queens ‘lyttel neck’. He thought that these female bones had lain in the earth for 300 years and that they were certainly all those of one person. No other female bones were found on this spot.”

The assessment of these remains is worth discussing in more detail. We need to keep in mind that the ethical constraints of modern archaeology and scientific methods of analysis used by osteoarchaeologists today did not exist when these works were undertaken. Much was made of the size and form of the bones during this excavation, for instance, the vertebrae evidencing Anne Boleyn’s ‘lyttel neck’. However, the pathology of the skeleton is not discussed. We would, in a modern excavation, look for more detailed evidence within the bones – such as the devastating damage caused to vertebrae when an individual is decapitated. This combined with radiocarbon dating, isotope analysis, an assessment of the stratigraphy of the site and, occasionally, DNA testing, would provide a far more stable identification.

Additionally, while it is possible for experienced osteoarchaeologists to sex a skeleton relatively quickly, the notion that this was done ‘at once’ suggests that these excavations had been undertaken with a pre-conceived conclusion – the discovery of Anne Boleyn – rather than being led by the evidence. Some assumptions do stand the test of time. We would expect a queen, even an executed one, to be buried within the chancel as the holiest place within the chapel. However, without any other evidence, it is impossible to state

with any certainty that these skeletons belong to the individuals to whom they are attributed and much less the position of these individuals within the chapel at present. That being said, regardless of where the individuals rest, it is important to remember that Saint Peter’s is a place of worship first, and a visitor attraction second. Each of the individuals interred within the chapel are treated with the respect and dignity that is due to any internment, and overseen by our resident chaplain.

The many roles of Saint Peter’s

The story of the chapel of Saint Peter ad Vincula is intertwined with every aspect of the Tower’s history, and the history of Christianity in England at large. Saint Peter’s has acted as a Catholic and Protestant chapel, a Chapel Royal and Royal Peculiar, a parish church for the Tower community and many other roles. It has witnessed dramatic events that would change the course of British history and is the resting place of traitors and victims, many of whom are remembered as people of courage, faith, and intelligence, alongside innumerable ordinary men and women. All of these factors lead to Saint Peter’s being a contradictory, baffling and sometimes indecipherable space – which adds to its uniquely spectacular history. Yet, it has only been through the everyday use of the chapel that this outstanding legacy has survived. It has been the host for the happiest moments of some people’s lives – and the very worst moments of others. As such, alongside the myths and the terror, it is important to view Saint Peters through its most consistent use – as a place faith and somewhere in which an ordinary person may find reflection, refuge or peace. ■

Further Reading

Bell, D. C. *Notices of the Historic Persons buried in the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula in the Tower of London* (London, 1877)

Hawkins, A ‘The Peculiar Case of a Royal Peculiar: A Problem of Faculty at the Tower of London’, *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, Vol 24 (3) pp. 1-19

Llewellyn, F *The Chapels in the Tower of London* (St Ives, 1987)



Alfred Hawkins is the Assistant Curator of Historic Buildings at the Tower of London.
www.hrp.org.uk