

## Toilets and Cowper Room – Statement of Significance

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For: The PCC of St Nicholas, Dereham

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## Summary

This Statement of Significance addresses the specific heritage features that may be affected by the proposals in this faculty application. The proposed work is to add lavatories to the North Transept, enclose the Cowper Chapel to create the Cowper Room and install a new timber screened storage area in the St George's Chapel of St Nicholas' Parish Church in Dereham, Norfolk. It is to be read in conjunction with the general Statement of Significance, written by Canon Paul Cubitt, and the Statement of Need.

This document assesses the impact of the proposals on the historic ceilings, floors, monuments, organ and other fabric elements within the affected part of the church. The proposals have been carefully considered to avoid any new harm to the most significant historic features, and allow only a minor impact on less individually significant historic fabric, and that only where essential to achieve the full benefits of the new facilities and, enhance the presentation of the most significant heritage elements.

The new facilities themselves will undoubtedly have a positive benefit on the future viability of this important church and it is believed that these substantial benefits to the church and community as a whole significantly outweigh the minor impacts on low-moderate significance elements identified.

## Context

St Nicholas' Church, Dereham, is an exceptional grade I listed medieval town parish church of cruciform plan with central lantern tower and a free-standing bell tower. It directly serves a community of around 20,000 and is at the heart of a larger catchment of smaller villages, for which it also serves as something of a regional 'minster'. It is a church that expresses a complex architectural evolution from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, most notably in its curious floor plan with a secondary crossing bay between the central tower and the chancel which is flanked by chapels (or quasi-transepts). The provenance of this floor plan remains a matter of academic debate but it has certainly affected and limited the ways in which the church can be used over the last 500 years or more and resulted in an unsettled liturgical layout.

In addition to its overall form and evolution, St Nicholas' contains some individual features of outstanding heritage significance, including two fine painted 15<sup>th</sup> Century ceilings, an impressive medieval font and the memorial to the renowned 18<sup>th</sup> century poet, William Cowper.

The general significance, social history and wider architectural history of the building is described in the *Statement of Significance, Dereham, St Nicholas' Church* (May 2021) prepared by the incumbent, Canon Paul Cubitt, and is not repeated here.

This document looks only at the significance of those features that are directly affected by the proposed works that form the subject of this faculty application, and any harm or enhancement resulting from the works. The features in question are predominantly those that are located in the North Transept, Cowper Chapel (officially the Chapel of St Edmund of Canterbury), the Eastern crossing (or antechoir) and the St George's Chapel. This includes the two painted Tudor ceilings, the organ, the war memorial screen, the William Cowper memorial and memorial window, a number of other 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century wall memorials and floor ledger slabs and the general historic fabric of these spaces.

## Features affected by the proposals

In this document we have attempted to assign to each element of the work an impact rating based on both disturbance to historic fabric and visual impact on the wider heritage significance of the building, or specific element. Ideally this would be accompanied by a corresponding scale identifying the significance of the various elements and the two scores combined to obtain a heritage impact rating as follows:

Degree of change/impact	Degree of heritage significance			
	Significant	Some significance	Not significant	Existing detractor
Substantial change/impact	High impact	Substantial impact	Neutral/low impact (+ or -)	Potential Enhancement
Some change/impact	Substantial impact	Significant impact	Neutral/low impact (+ or -)	Potential Enhancement
Minor change/impact	Significant impact	Low impact	Neutral/low impact (+ or -)	Potential Enhancement
No change/Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact	Neutral impact
Enhancement to significance	Some benefit	Low benefit	Neutral impact	N/A

Those features that are indisputably of high significance in the areas affected by the works are the Tudor roofs, the Cowper Memorial and the Cowper stained glass window. Priority has been given within the proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these features. Also of high significance is the overall form and historical development of the church.

Those items of some significance are the wall memorials, inscribed floor ledger slabs Cowper railings and floors generally. Their significance is affected by their age and individual beauty, who is commemorated, the extent to which they preserve or express their original design intent and their presentation. It is undeniable that the significance of many of these items has been impaired by the change in context as a result of the relocation of the organ to the North transept in 1994 which has left them in an isolated part of the church that is difficult to use for normal liturgical purposes and of very different character to that in which the monuments were installed c. 200 years ago. Relocating the organ is a major endeavour, comparable in scale to the current proposed project, and would not have been done in 1994 without due consideration. Although it has changed the context of the surrounding space, the current location is probably the best location for this instrument in this building and there is no reason to think that the organ should be, or is likely to be relocated again within the foreseeable future. This leaves the church with the challenge of the best way to make use of the spaces that have been affected, which presently feel unused and unloved. This project aims to resolve this issue by putting these spaces to highly desirable and necessary practical use which improve the future prospects for the church building as a whole.

The attribution of significance to the elements that earn their significance from their wider context is very difficult to establish with any kind of objectivity and our approach has been to ensure that any impact on such features is minor and necessary in order to achieve the objectives of the project.

The advice and comments of the statutory consultees and amenity societies have been taken on board and proposals have been amended to further reduce any potential impact on historic elements.

The biggest change/impact on historic fabric is undoubtedly the relaying of the Cowper Room floor which is discussed in greater detail below, but there is clear precedent for relaying this floor level and it is considered to be an important element of a successful project.

### Architecture and massing generally

Insertion of a toilet 'pod' and screening off of a part of the internal volume of the church to provide thermal and acoustic separation is inevitably going to have some impact on internal views. However most of the views of the affected areas are already interrupted by the organ which was relocated to its current position from the South Transept in 1994. The proposals have a low additional impact (*figure 1*). The toilets pod replaces an existing timber (plywood) partition that encloses the existing storage area in the same location. The flat roof to the toilet means that the additional visual impact of this element will be minimal. Higher quality detailing that draws on the style of the adjacent organ will result in a positive overall impact on the appearance. Similarly the partition containing the kitchenette will have no greater impact than the existing choir vestry 'pod' in the same location.



*Figure 1 View looking NE from the nave towards the proposed Cowper Room. None of the proposed alterations are readily visible from the nave being screened by the tower piers and organ.*

Comparing the present views with photos from 1948 in the Historic England archive (*figures 2 and 3*) it can easily be seen how much the organ relocation has changed the character of this space. The current proposals and space usage result to a considerable extent from this placing of the organ. Moving an organ of this size is a major undertaking and not something that is anticipated in the foreseeable future. However, having been moved to this location in living memory it cannot be ruled out that it may be moved again or replaced in generations to come and it therefore seems appropriate that the current proposals for subdividing the space with screens and modern facilities have a similar degree of reversibility and longevity to the organ and this is the approach that has been taken. The only element that requires some change to the existing fabric is the relaying of the Cowper Room floor. Nevertheless, as the all ledger slabs would be retained and there is evidence that this too has already been relaid in the last 200 years, even this would be substantially reversible, if needed.





Figure 2 (left) A view looking East towards the Cowper Chapel in 1948 (Historic England Archive).



Figure 3 (right) A similar view now. The organ was relocated from the South Transept to the North Transept c. 1994.

The most visible change from the current appearance will be the screen between the eastern crossing and the Cowper chapel (*figures 4 & 5*). However, this has been carefully designed with a lightly framed glazed screen above to preserve the view of the William Cowper window while providing a screened area at lower level.



Figure 4 (left) Looking North towards the proposed Cowper Room.

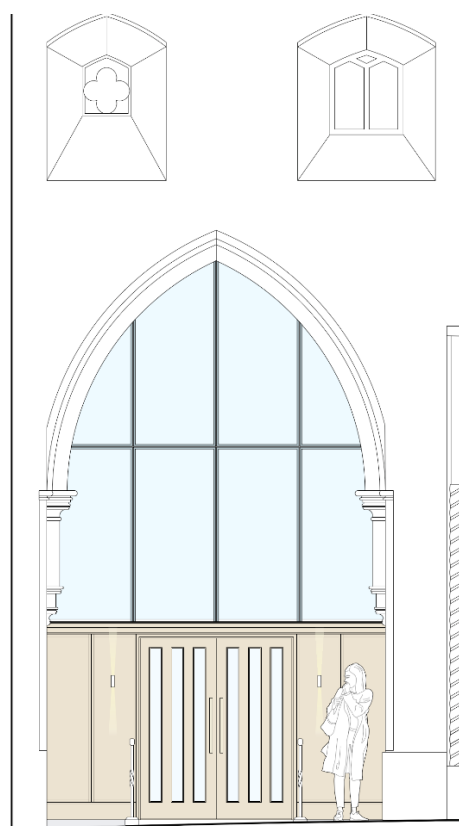


Figure 5 (right) The same archway as proposed. The William Cowper stained glass window will continue to be visible.

The proposed storage screen in the St Georges chapel has similarities to the vestry enclosure in the same location in 1948 (figures 6 and 7).

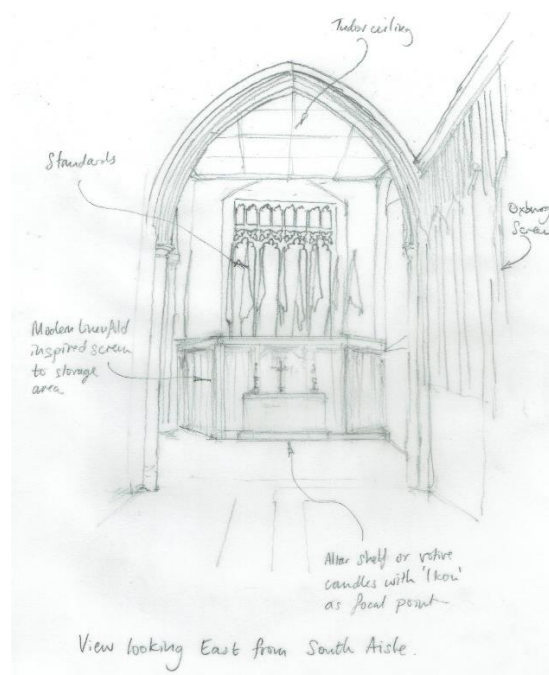
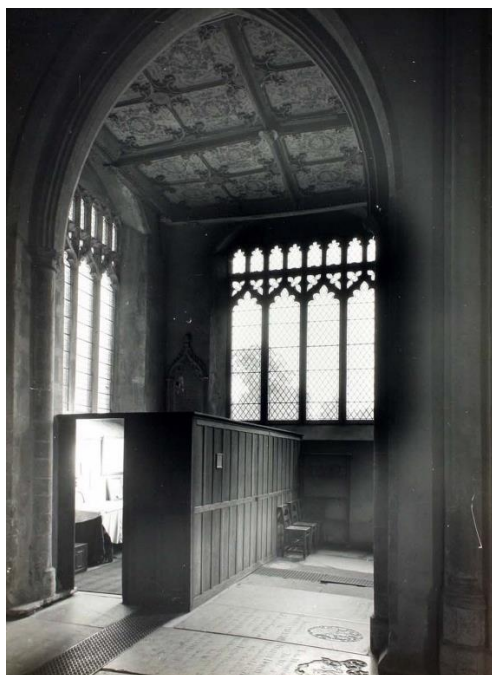
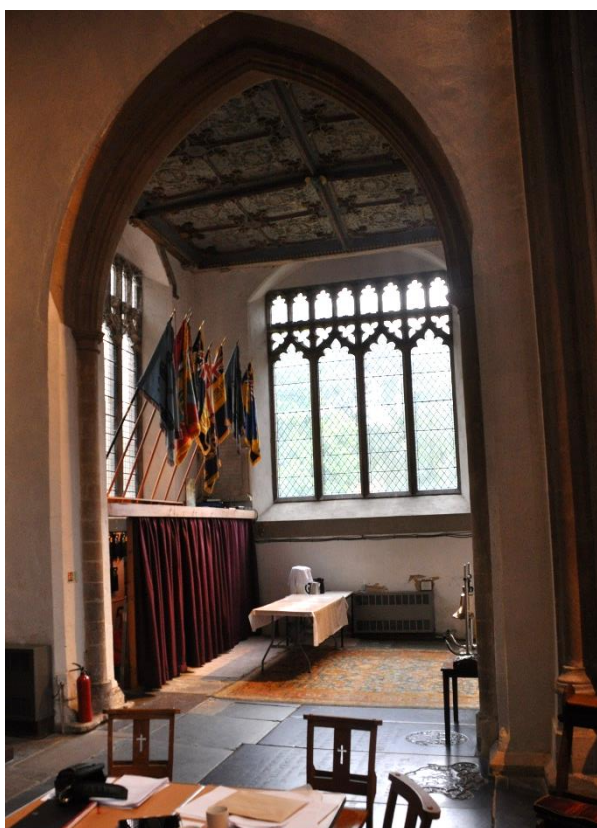


Figure 6 (above-left) The vestry screen in St George's Chapel in 1948

Figure 7 (above-right) A sketch of the proposed screen. The angled sides reflect the flow of circulation around the building and the openings at either end allow for more efficient storage.

Figure 8 (below-left) The same view as figure 6 today with a curtain screening the electrical distribution board and temporary kitchenette.

Figure 9 (below-right) The view looking East along the south aisle today.





## Floors

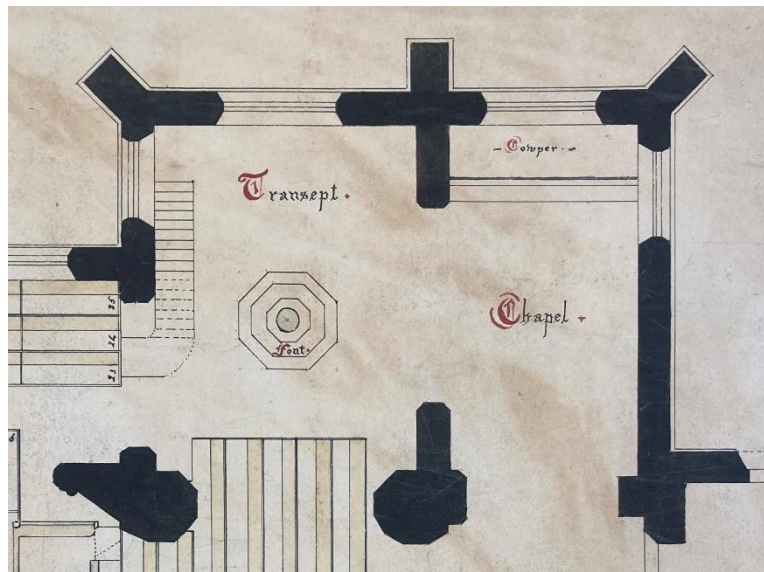
A number of floors are affected by the proposals. These divide into three areas:

- The North Transept
- St George's Chapel
- The Cowper Chapel

The floor of the church slopes up considerably towards the east and has clearly always done so.

### The North Transept floor

This area was the baptistery in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the location of the medieval font (*figure 8*). It was substantially re-ordered in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century (after 1884), when the font was moved back to the west end. The floor is of a mixture of flag stones, mostly riven or claw-tooled York stone, with the occasional delaminating slate and some incomplete historic ledger slabs. Significant areas have been lifted and relaid in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century for heating works.



*Figure 10 An 1852 plan (NRO) showing the North Transept with the former position of the font (relocated in 1884) and Cowper Chapel showing the Cowper 'Sanctuary'. The organ now occupies the location of the font. The nave aisle galleries were removed c. 1884 along with their staircases.*

Some ledger slabs are probably 16<sup>th</sup> century or earlier but are broken/incomplete and have long lost their original inlaid brasses. Those with brasses have no inscriptions to identify their provenance. There are very faint traces of inscriptions on one stone, again probably dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier, but the stone is cracked and the wording is indecipherable and incomplete.

A large portion of the floor has been covered by the organ and is no longer open to view.

Under the proposals, the exposed areas of the North Transept floor are to be retained in situ and overlaid with a ventilated timber floor construction to form the base of the toilet pods. The ledger slabs would be covered but otherwise unaffected by the proposals. The impact of covering the floor on its heritage significance is **very low**.

### St George's Chapel floor

This floor consists mostly of riven Yorkstone with some sawn Yorkstone and some hard limestone ledger slabs with inscriptions. Here, the scope of works is limited to providing a more satisfactory and permanent access stone in the location of a former junction of an infloor heating duct. The infloor duct was still covered with an open grating in 1971 and has only been covered over relatively recently. The area of floor affected has clearly been disturbed numerous times in recent years and is currently covered with a sheet of plywood and carpet due to its unevenness. The plywood is not allowing the floor to breath and is harming the surrounding floor.

The work proposed here will allow the plywood and carpet to be removed, provide an improved floor surface and better access to the services below and represents a **positive impact** from a heritage perspective.

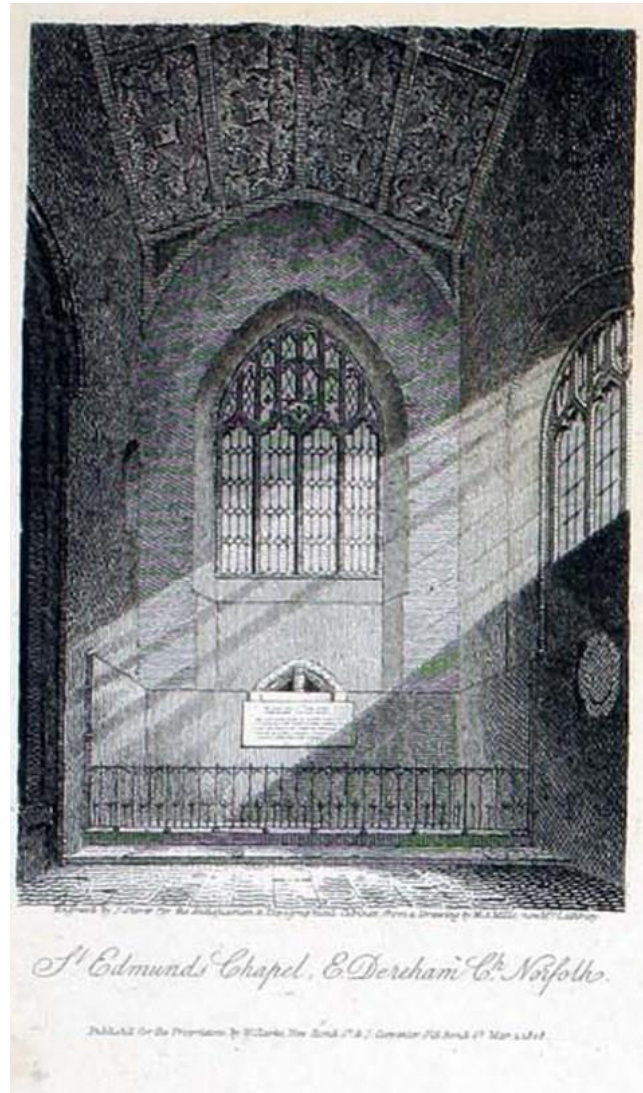
### The Cowper Chapel Floor

This area of floor consists of an irregular run of black marble (hard limestone) ledger slabs interspersed with grey marble (hard limestone) slabs and the occasional smaller stone (e.g. blue-black slate), probably of more recent date. At the Northern end is the railed off sanctuary and steps of the Cowper Memorial which are all of a piece in pale English limestone with square stones set at 45° within the sanctuary area. In general, the chapel floor is well laid and is a good quality floor although the slope of the floor is considerable in this area, as can be seen from the angle of the altar and candlesticks in the 1948 photo from the Historic England archives (*figure 11*).



*Figure 11 (above) 1948 photo of the Cowper Chapel looking North (Historic England Archive). The significant slope of the floor can easily be seen in the angle of the altar and candlesticks and at the Cowper sanctuary step.*

*Figure 12 (right) An undated engraving of the same view in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Cowper memorial was originally set in panelling below the window cill and the floor of the Cowper Chapel (St Edmund's Chapel) is clearly level.*



Although local areas have evidently been lifted for the installation of services in the 1960s and 1970s (*figures 13 and 14*), plans from 1884 show the black ledger slabs in their current positions at that date. The dates of the ledger slabs, which range from 1705 to 1799, suggest that floor as it exists now was laid some time after 1800 and before 1884. Further names were added to existing slabs dated 1808 and 1825 and one further slab was added in 1841 so the slabs may have been relaid in their current configuration around this date.

One unusual discrepancy in the physical record of the floor is the unsatisfactory junction between the Cowper sanctuary steps (of shortly after 1800), which are laid level, and the sloping floor of the rest of the chapel which suggests that the floor was level in this location in c. 1800 and has been returned to a slope subsequently. Marks on the adjacent arch respond base also reinforce the suggestion that this chapel area once had a level floor, probably with some sort of screen or altar rail at the step down to the North transept.



No step line is shown on the pew plan of 1847, but neither is the Cowper sanctuary, which was certainly present at that date.

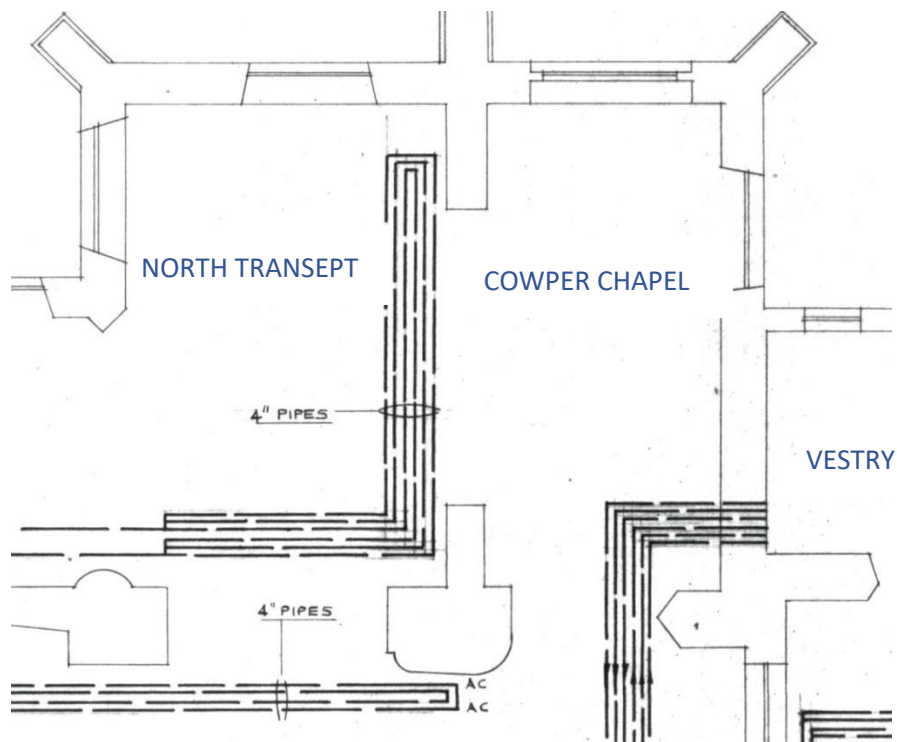


Figure 13 Extract from 1967 heating plan showing underfloor pipework routes that have resulted in relaid areas of floor. The 1948 photos show many of these as open heating channels with cast iron grilles. 1967 is probably when the boiler was relocated to the 1922 vestry.

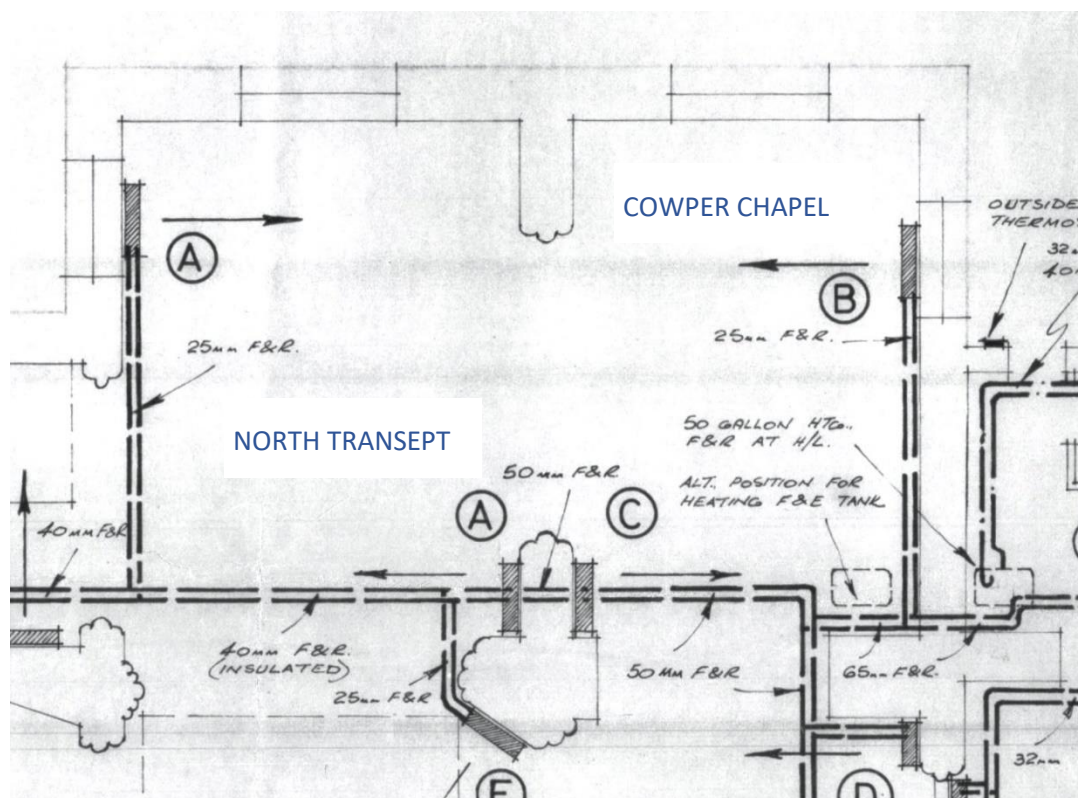


Figure 14 Extract from 1978 plan showing underfloor pipework routes that have resulted in relaid areas of floor.

However, based on a print from the Historic England Archive (*figure 12, above*), it is safe to deduce that the current floor is a 19<sup>th</sup> century floor re-ordering of the 18<sup>th</sup> century ledger slabs and that this part of the floor was previously level. While the floor has therefore has some significance in its current 19<sup>th</sup> century form and matches the slope of the floor in the church generally, it is by no means 'original' or even 'early' in the context of the church, and the assumption that the whole floor area of the church always sloped does not seem to be correct.

The current proposals necessitate a level floor to the Cowper Room and lavatories. Various options were considered for achieving a level floor including a number of overlaid options. While an overlaid floor is ideal for the lavatories where the floor forms part of the toilet pod and can be ventilated below and be finished with an impervious, cleanable floor finish above, an overlaid floor presents difficulties in the Cowper Room due to needing to create a taper-to-nothing whilst also preserving breathability and providing continuous structural support. Overlaying the floor would also mean covering up a significant number of ledger slabs. The advice of the DAC following their meeting was:

*"The floor of the whole church slopes down from east to west and comprises several ledger stones in the Cowper chapel. Any door opening onto this slope would become jammed. The parish representatives raised the idea of creating a false floor over the existing one but there was DAC opposition to covering the ledger stones. DAC members suggested either moving the ledger stones elsewhere (although this would separate the memorials to the Bagge and Warner families on the floor and walls) or levelling the floor and reinstating the ledger stones. There was a discussion about a requirement to speak to family members who own the ledger stones. The DAC would prefer the whole floor of that area to be levelled in one undertaking."*

On the basis of this well-considered advice, the current proposals now seek to relay the Cowper Chapel floor level, reproducing the existing layout of grey marble stones and black marble ledger slabs. This is both to ensure that the Cowper Room is as useful as possible for its proposed purpose (e.g. being able to put up tables without drinks spillages running off one side) and also to eliminate issues with door swings which would otherwise result in visually uncomfortable and practically awkward tapering gaps below. The issue does not present itself in the rest of the church due to the absence of doors and lack of traditional concern for level access, but doors are an inherent feature of the acoustically separated spaces required for both the meeting room and the lavatories. The Church Buildings Council say in their comments on the proposals that *"There are alternative ways to mitigate the slope of the floor and the swing of the door"*. With the floor slope in this location being greater than 1:50 (1.2°) we simply do not agree. This would require a gap under a single door of around 25mm in order to provide a clear swing or more than 40mm for a double door, increasing to over 75mm if the doors were to be able to fold right back (as is intended in this case). Alternatively thresholds would need to be created of similar dimension forming trip-hazards and impeding accessibility. Where such issues with the floor slope can be avoided an alternative solution has been proposed, as in the case of the new screen to the storage area in the St George's Chapel where curtains are proposed in place of doors.

As the one feature of the project that requires any significant adaptation to historic fabric, the proposals seek to provide a new floor arrangement that would make sense even without the proposed dividing screens. Levelling the floor would create a step at the archways between the North Transept and Cowper Chapel and between the Cowper Chapel and eastern crossing. A Portland limestone step riser/kerb would be installed at the new change in level.

At the North Transept arch, the new step comes within the lower quality North Transept paving and all cut or replaced stones would be Yorkstone slabs with very low individual significance. The new step would create a consistent three inch step into the chapel similar to a chancel step and would be an appropriate feature in this location.

At the Eastern Crossing arch, the change in level would create a tapering step. This would be formed with a stone ramp access with black iron handrails, designed both to provide step free access and also eliminate the safety issues of a tapering step. Having omitted the alterations to the medieval respond base by the organ, this is also the only step free route to the toilets. The kerb and ramp in this location necessitate the relocation of three inscribed ledger stones which would be resited in the relaid Cowper Room floor as indicated on the plans.

The existing floor appears to be laid on sand and it is proposed that the new floor is laid on a similar sand bed. Minimal limecrete footings extending no more than 300mm below the existing floor level are proposed to the new kerbs/steps and ramp, the excavation of which may require some archaeological monitoring. The floor would be laid level with the existing highest point against the east wall requiring a small additional build-up but, with the exception of the kerb, no excavation is anticipated below the level of the existing paving bed. Overall, there would therefore be minimal impact on any potential archaeology.

Although the inscriptions are typically worn with age, most of the slabs are not cracked or damaged and should therefore lift and relay relatively easily. Once relaid, the ledger slabs would be exposed to view and would remain close to associated wall memorials. We therefore believe the heritage impact of relaying this 19<sup>th</sup> century floor to be **low to moderate** but as the only significant change to historic fabric is substantially outweighed by the wider benefits of this project to the viability of the historic building and the current community's needs.

## Walls

With the exception of small fixings to secure studwork partition walls and new wall mounted heaters/lighting, the walls not majorly affected by the proposed works. It seems likely that much of the church was re-rendered in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century after the galleries were removed. It can be seen from the 1948 photos that the walls were previously natural render-coloured and were limewashed in 1971. Some of the walls are slightly damaged at low level in the Cowper Chapel and North transept due to low levels of damp, probably as a result of relatively high external ground levels, and being damaged by movable furniture. Damaged areas will be made good with lime render to match existing and the walls of the Cowper Room and any other directly affected areas are to be relimewashed. In the context of the normal wear and tear, the impact on the walls is considered to be **very low**.

## Arches

The proposed screens of the Cowper Room are to be inserted in the existing arched openings. The arch opening onto the eastern crossing is believed to be Early English (13<sup>th</sup> Century) while the arch to the North transept appears to be later, perhaps 15<sup>th</sup> Century. In each case the proposed inserted steel glass screens are designed to have minimal impact on the appearance of the arch.

The steel framing is to be bespoke made to allow fixings to be made into mortar joints in the stonework with scribed margins to accommodate stringcourses without needing to alter the historic fabric. In each case the frame is located in the opening so as to preserve the arch form from both sides but also to fully express the architectural detail located at the centre of the existing arch profile when seen from the main part of the church: The part shafts with knot corbels on that to the Eastern Crossing and the shields at the capitals on that to the North Transept.

When seen from elsewhere in the building, the slender black framing of the screens will have minimal impact on the sense of openness and light from the Cowper Chapel. The impact on the arches is considered to be **very low – low**.

## Ceilings/roofs

The Tudor ceilings in the Cowper Chapel (*figure 15, below*) and St George's Chapel (*figure 16, below*) are two of the chief glories of St Nicholas' church and are at present poorly presented and undercelebrated. No work is proposed to either roof as part of the current proposal. However, in both spaces the proposals include new LED uplighting that will bring out the colour and splendour of these historic ceilings and allow them to be fully appreciated. The proposed high CRI (colour rendering index) LED lighting will bring out the colours while having a negligible UV light content so as not to cause light damage to the pigments. The proposed new lighting is therefore considered to have a **beneficial impact** on the presentation of these two important ceilings.

The heritage bodies raised concerns about the impact that enclosing the Cowper Chapel and providing independent heating for this volume might have on the microclimate of this space, and whether this may in turn have an impact on the historic ceiling. These concerns have been taken on board and following



discussions with the Diocesan Heating Advisor, the heating specification and screen design have been amended. A conservation report is also being commissioned specifically to address this concern.

At present the church is heated with fan assisted convector heaters which heat the air. As with all heating systems, but particularly air-heating options, the hot air rises and tends to accumulate at the ceilings before gradually warming the lower stratas of the building. An area such as the Cowper Chapel roof will be particularly affected by this rising heat causing variations in temperature as it is isolated from neighbouring roof spaces by the spandrel walls above the arched openings creating an inverted 'pool' of hotter air at the ceiling. This warmer air begins to escape into (the less historically significant) neighbouring roof spaces at the level of the top of the existing arched openings. The most reliable way to address this issue is through passive ventilation – preserving a sufficiently large opening at the top of the higher arched opening will substantially maintain the status quo. It is therefore proposed to stop the glazing 600mm short of the top of the higher arch screen providing a clear opening for excess high level heat to escape of 0.85sqm (a little over half the size of a typical single door opening). The existing arrangements for dissipation of accumulated heat and any difference in relative humidity will therefore be maintained and there will be no impact on the ceiling. Being at high level and in a location away from a direct line of hearing, such an opening should not excessively compromise the acoustic separation of the spaces.

Furthermore, in order to provide an improved and more consistent climate for the historic ceiling while at the same time providing more immediate heat to users, it is also proposed to change the heating in the Cowper Chapel from convected air heating to radiant heating with a high level destratification fan added to ensure that the proportion of convected heat that does occur is dispersed throughout the space. The proposed radiant heaters are of the low surface temperature non-glowing panel type distributed at floor level around the available wall space, providing immediate heat to users. The heating panels will be printed to double up as interpretation panels featuring the life and writings of the poet William Cowper, to whom the room is to be dedicated.

The simple modern styled white destratification fan will be wall mounted near the apex of the south wall of the space. Destratification fans are quiet-operating and will be less disruptive than the existing fan-assisted convector heaters. The two existing convector heaters in this space will be removed and the walls around them made good with lime render and limewash.

Although radiant heaters still gradually heat the air, the proportion of air heating through convection is much lower and, in conjunction with the destratification fan, these heating arrangements will heat the ceiling much more slowly than the existing convector heaters.

The combination of these measures is expected to have a **neutral or minor beneficial** impact on the existing historic ceiling compared to existing arrangements.



*Figure 15 The painted 15<sup>th</sup> Century roof of the Cowper Chapel.*

The alternative to the passive ventilation approach proposed is an active system with automatic climate monitoring of the roof combined with automated powered extraction. However, this would require ducted extraction at high level that would have an impact on other historic fabric, as well as presenting potential maintenance issues and there would be an increased risk of failure due to power cuts lack of maintenance or other equipment failures.

New uplighting mounted on the proposed St George's Chapel screen (discussed under lighting below) should also enhance the presentation of the St George's Chapel ceiling, which is otherwise unaffected by these proposals.



*Figure 16 The fabulous ceiling of the St George's Chapel, believed to date from c. 1430.*

## Monuments

There are over a dozen late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century wall monuments in the North Transept and Cowper Chapel (*figure 17*), including that to the poet William Cowper. Prior to the organ being relocated to the North Transept in 1994, this area was a more open and visible part of the church. Until the 1880s, the font was

located in the North Transept, making it something of a baptistery, and the Cowper Chapel seems to have been free of fixed pews. Due to the presence of galleries throughout the nave aisles until the 1880s, this area provided the largest expanse of open walls in the 'people's' part of the church for mounting of memorials and also provided an open area from which they could be seen.

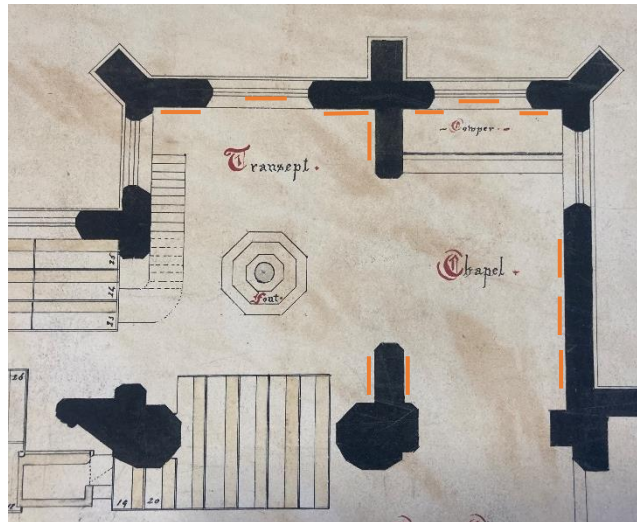


Figure 17 Extract from plan of 1852 showing North Transept and Cowper Chapel. Locations of wall monuments added in orange.

Furthermore, the North Transept contained a staircase providing access to the North aisle gallery making these monuments a prominent feature to the individuals from the lower classes as they descended from the gallery seating as well as those occupying the west-facing seats under the central tower, subtly reinforcing the social hierarchy. There is nothing to suggest that these memorials have been relocated since their installation.

It is fair to say that the relocation of the organ to the North Transept was harmful to the context of these monuments, especially those within the North Transept, as it obscures most longer views of the memorials and relegated them from what was an important open area in the church to what became largely redundant spaces behind the organ (Figure 18).

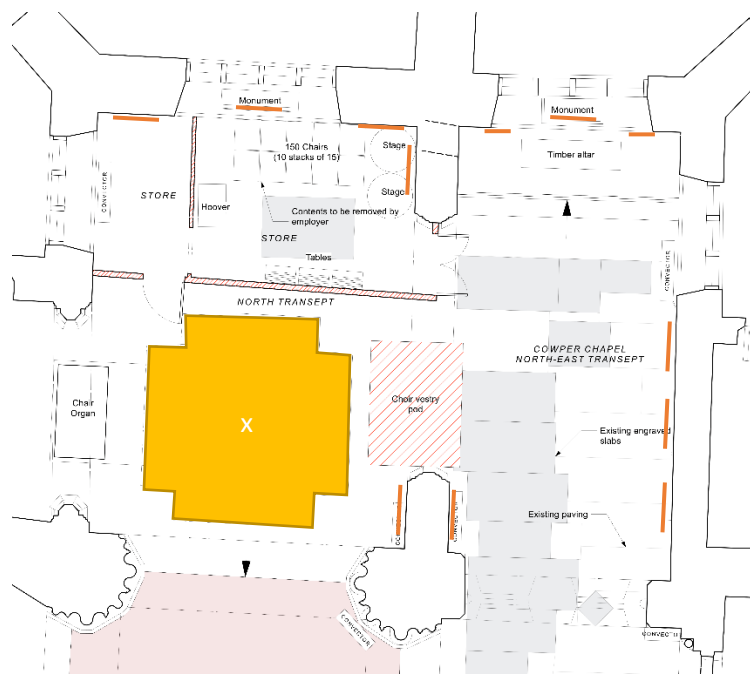


Figure 18 Extract from As Existing plan. Organ shown in yellow. Locations of wall monuments added in orange.

The northern end of the North Transept was subsequently enclosed with a 7' high plywood screen and used for storage of ladders, chairs, staging and other paraphernalia. The five monuments in this part of the church have therefore effectively been 'in storage' and largely inaccessible to the public.

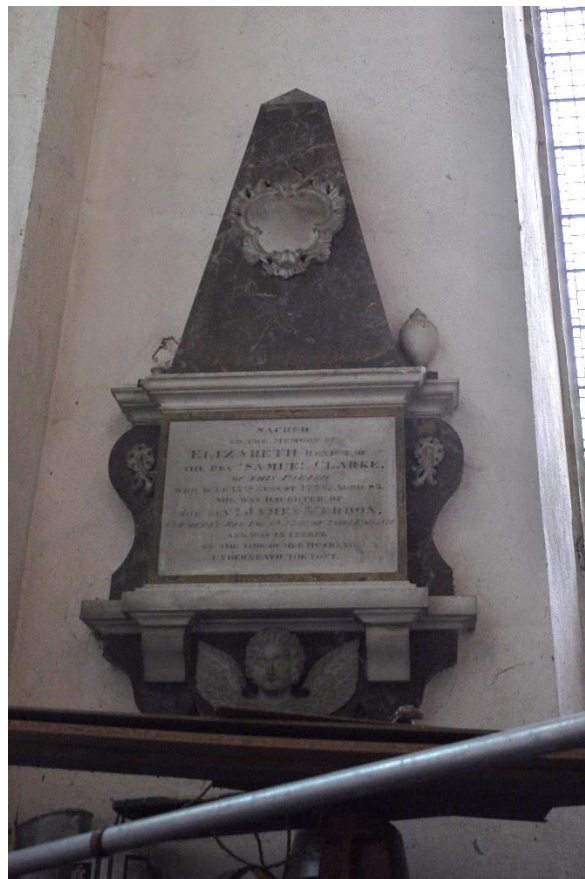


While those in the Cowper Chapel are less affected, the character of this space is also substantially altered by being at the back of the organ. Since the organ is unlikely to be relocated again in the foreseeable future, the monuments must be assessed on the basis of this current, impaired presentation.

For those monuments in the Cowper Chapel, the enclosing of the space to create a more contained room with a new purpose is likely to enhance, rather than harm, the setting of these monuments by returning the Cowper Chapel to a positive, active space. The proposed interpretation panels (on the radiant panel heaters) will also enhance the understanding and appreciation of William Cowper's memorial and of the memorials to Mary Unwin (his friend) and Margaret Perowne (his nurse), both important women to William Cowper in his latter years. To the nine wall memorials in the Cowper Chapel we believe the proposals represent a **minor benefit** over the current situation with the interpretation providing an additional **moderate benefit** to the presentation of that of William Cowper. Similarly, although there is little that can be done to improve the setting of the monument to improve the setting of the handsome memorial to John Ward in the south-east corner of the North Transept, under the proposals, this becomes a more positive space and an active circulation route which will allow the memorial to be better appreciated (**neutral/minor benefit**).

The memorials whose setting is most affected by the proposed works are the five memorials in the northern end of the North Transept. These are addressed in turn below.

#### Memorial to Elizabeth Clarke



*Figure 19 Monument to Elizabeth Clarke d.1793, wife of Rev'd Samuel Clarke (Rector of Dereham 1740-1761) and Daughter of James Verdon (Rector of Dereham 1677-1740).*

The Memorial to Elizabeth Clarke (*figure 19*) is located to the LHS (west) of the North Transept North window. It has lost its left-hand urn at some point since 1948. It is within the existing janitorial store and often partially obscured by stored items. Due to its location it is not readily seen from outside the existing store area. Under the proposals, this memorial remains within the open store area. The new store is likely to be better organised, without the higher level storage. Overall the impact on this memorial in comparison to existing arrangements is **neutral or very minor beneficial**.

## Memorial to Peter Stoughton, Elizabeth Stoughton and Samuel Stoughton



*Figure 20 Monument to Peter Stoughton d. 1805, of Elizabeth, his wife d.1895 (Daughter of Rev'd Samuel Clarke – Rector 1740-1761) and of Samuel their younger son.*

The memorial to Peter Stoughton and his wife (*figure 20*) is located on the window cill of the North Transept north window. Peter Stoughton is described as a Gentleman and appears to have lived in Wymondham. He is commemorated here with his wife who was daughter of Rev'd Samuel Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (described above) and therefore 'of this parish'.

The memorial is relatively plain with no exceptional architectural merit. It can be glimpsed from the eastern end of the nave, over the chair organ and from the Cowper Chapel and this will remain the case under the proposals. Closer to, it can also only be seen from the existing storage area and is often partially obscured. Under the proposals, this memorial would remain accessible from the roof of the toilet pod. Although the pod roof level is a little higher than the window cill, it comes no higher than the plinth of the monument and so the monument would still be readable and open to view or study. The impact on this memorial is therefore considered to be **very low-neutral**.

## Memorial to Rev'd Samuel Clarke



Figure 21 (left) Monument to Rev'd Samuel Clarke d.1761 (Rector 1740-1761).

Figure 22 (above) The corresponding inscribed floor stone. This is now located close to the West wall of the North Transept. Although 'under the font' might be interpreted loosely as near the base of the font, it is likely that this stone has been moved to its present position since the gallery staircase was in this location in 1761 whe Samuel Clarke was interred and that it no longer accurately marks the grave. The floor marker would remain open to view within the flower store.

The monument to the Rev'd Samuel Clarke (*figure 21*) corresponds with that of his wife on the west side of the North Transept window. Her memorial states that they were both interred under the font which was located at the time in the North Transept in the area now covered by the organ (*figure 22*).

This monument is glimpsed from the nave over the chair organ and existing store partition and this view will be unaffected by the proposals. At close range, it can only be viewed from inside the storage area. The memorial will continue to be accessible for research purposes from the roof of the toilet pod and also seen at closer range through the rooflight of the toilet pod lobby. It is a fine monument to a former Rector and it is difficult to assess the precise impact of the change in its context. Overall it is considered to be **low**.

One hopes that this “*true friend of the poor and needy*” would be pleased to see such provision being made for them as befits our current age!



## Memorials to William Wilson Lee Warner and Edward Lee Warner

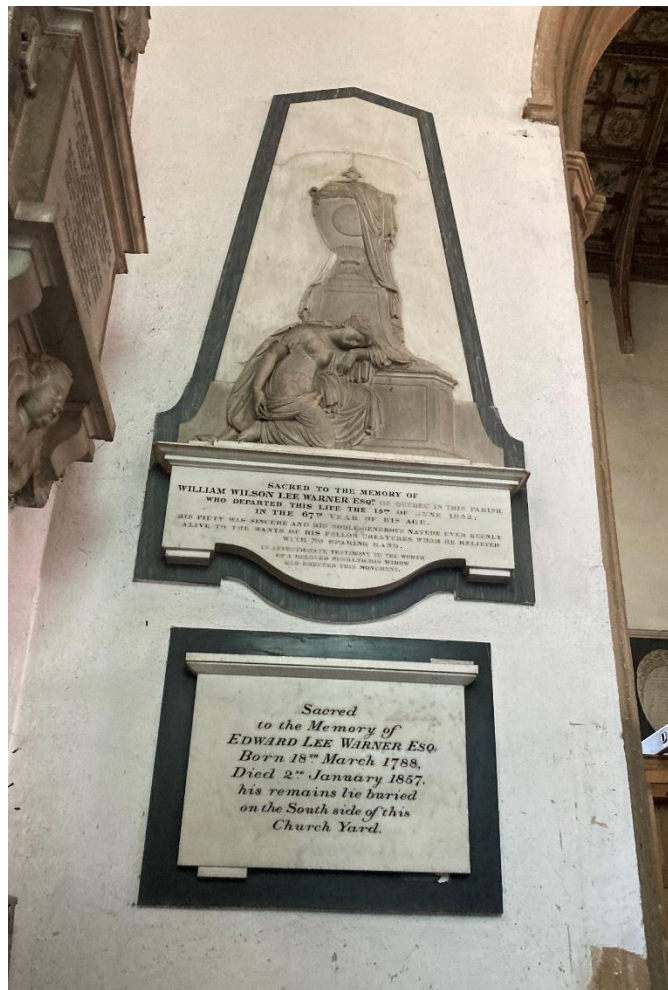


Figure 23 Monument to William Wilson Lee Warner Esq. of Quebec House and below it a memorial to his younger brother Edward Lee Warner Esq.

The Lee Warners were the second generation of local squires in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, residing at Quebec Castle/House on the North side of the town. Their father, Charles Elsdon Bagge was a medical doctor from Kings Lynn who purchased Quebec house some time from 1790. Charles Elsdon Bagge, his wife Anne, and other siblings are commemorated in the adjacent Cowper Chapel. Although born William Wilson Bagge and Edward Bagge, each took their mother's family name of Lee Warner. William Wilson inherited Quebec House from his father. Having only a daughter, the property passed to his surviving younger brother, Edward Lee Warner, described as being in the 'civil service of the honourable East India Company', before being inherited by W. W. Lee Warner's daughter, Maria. Maria married into the Bulwer family of Wood Dalling. The Bulwer family moved away from Dereham in 1912 and Quebec House was sold. Descendants of the Bulwer family still live at Heydon Hall, Norfolk.

As with the other nearby memorials, the upper memorial (Figure 23) can be glimpsed from the north nave aisle, past the organ (Figure 24). However, the lower monument can only currently be seen from inside the storage area with limited public access. Under the proposals the toilet pod roof is designed so that it is not more than 40mm thick at the point where it abuts this wall and is set so that the lobby ceiling runs in level with the top of the black margin of the lower memorial so that the abutment fits in between the two memorials. Consequently, neither monument is directly affected by the proposals. The upper memorial will continue to be visible in glimpsed views past the organ, as at present, and will be fully accessible from the roof of the toilet pod for research purposes. The lower memorial will be easily visible within the lobby area leading to the toilets. The two upper memorials to William Wilson Lee Warner and Rev'd Samuel Clarke, will also both be visible through the clear-glazed roof light of the toilet lobby.



*Figure 24 Monuments to Rev'd Samuel Clarke and William Wilson Lee Warner as glimpsed from the north aisle. The memorial to Edward Lee Warner can only be seen from within the existing store area.*

The CBC suggests re-siting the monuments to give them “appropriate dignity” but the church does not agree that the current proposals impair their dignity any more than the existing storage arrangements. Clearly, the use of this part of the church has changed but there is no evidence that the memorials have previously been re-sited and it seems likely that there is a greater risk of harm to their fabric, significance, and the significance of this area of the church by moving them. The church did consider omitting the roof to the lobby area, but the lobby serves as an important acoustic airlock. Omitting the roof would risk toilet flush and tap noises carrying into the church and would seriously impair the effectiveness of the proposed scheme.

The proposed amended (flat) rooflight design, however, allows a more direct view of the wall monuments through the rooflight so the relationship of the monuments can still be seen. If the concern was that the Edward Lee Warner memorial was rendered undignified by its proximity to the toilets, the church does not believe this to be the case. A memorial is there to be seen and read. Currently it located behind staging within the store area and cannot be seen from anywhere else in the church. Under the proposals the memorial to Edward Lee Warner is likely to be the most seen and read of any of the monuments in the church being at eye-height and seen at close proximity in an area that will inevitably become well-used. Overall, it is considered that the heritage impact on these monuments is **low** and is substantially outweighed by the benefits of the proposed toilets. The heritage impact of re-siting the monuments would also result in some minor heritage harm and therefore leaving them in position is the church’s preferred option.

As with the monument to the Rector, the memorial to William Wilson Lee Warner professes his sense of responsibility to the needs of his fellow creatures: *“His piety was sincere and his noble, generous nature ever keenly alive to the wants of his fellow creatures whom he relieved with no sparing hand”*. Based on this epitaph, one hopes that he too would have supported the noble aims of this project!

## St George's Chapel wall memorials

There are two wall memorials located over the existing temporary kitchenette on the return walls to either side of the chapel's east window. That on the southern side is to Thomas Rash (1688-1760) and Thomazine, his wife (*Figure 26*) and that on the North to James Bird (d.1787) and his wife, Sarah (*Figure 25*). Thomas Rash was local brewer and it is thought that he may have been responsible for initiating the building of the aforementioned Quebec House. Both monuments appear to have been adapted and reset in uncharacteristic 19<sup>th</sup>-century gothic surrounds. The cusped ogee arch that previously formed the top of the Rash memorial has been fallen away but the pieces have been retained and it is hoped that they can be reinstated as part of the works. At present the memorials cannot be seen square-on due to the temporary kitchenette. In 1948 there was a larger vestry screen in this location. The current proposed screen has many similarities to the earlier vestry screen and, in the context of these various relatively recent historic changes, these latest proposals are not considered to significantly affect the setting of these memorials. When the stored items are removed, both monuments will be more visible and have improved access from inside the new storage area than at present. Impact: **neutral**.



*Figure 25 (Left) Memorial to James Bird (d. 1787) remounted within an incongruous 19<sup>th</sup> Century cusped gothic surround, located on the northern nib wall of the St George's Chapel.*

*Figure 26 (Right) Memorial to Thomas Rash (1688-1760) – possibly the builder of Quebec House. Also remounted but the later surround has now lost its cusped gothic top.*

## The Last Supper

The *Last Supper* (*Figure 27*) is a cast iron (it is thought) relief sculpture set in a limestone mounting. While the subject is clearly based on Leonardo da Vinci's fresco at the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, nothing is known of the provenance of this item. Judging from the stone surround, it is assumed to date from the early 20<sup>th</sup> or possibly the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was certainly in its current position in 1948 (*figure 28*). There is no obvious significance to its current position. In order to install the proposed Cowper Room partition in the optimum position within this arched opening the relief and stone frame will need to be moved to another location within the church. Relocation of the item, a copy artwork with unknown provenance that is likely to be one of a number of identical castings, is not considered to substantially affect its significance. Impact: **low**.



It was previously suggested that it should be relocated to the adjacent wall within the Cowper Room. Since this wall space is now required for a radiant heater, it is instead proposed that it is re-installed at eyeheight on the south-west central tower pier, facing into the south aisle (figure 29).



Figure 27 (Left) 'The Last Supper' – Iron relief casting by unknown artist and date – based on the fresco by Leonardo Da Vinci.

Figure 28 (Right) HE archive photo from 1948 showing the relief in its current position.

Figure 29 (Below) The proposed new location for the piece in the south aisle on the blank southern face of the SW tower pier, where it will occupy a similar position to its present location but with the added significance of being seen with the nave altar beyond.



## Cowper railings

William Cowper (1731-1800) was a popular poet in his day and is the most celebrated of those memorialised here in St Nicholas' Dereham. He wrote a number of anti-slavery poems and struggled for much of his life with mental illness but is probably best known for his hymns, such as "Oh! For a closer walk with God!" He is also the originator of the expression "Variety's the very spice of life".

The engraving from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (*Figure 12*) suggests that the memorial to William Cowper (poet) was always austere and puritanical in character and, despite some rearrangement in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to accommodate the marble roundels to his friend of later life, Mary Unwin and Magaret Perowne, and the loss of the timber panelling, retains its austere character. The loss of the timber panelling probably accounts for the awkward detail at the wall fixings (*figure 30*). William Cowper is believed to be buried below the steps marked by the brass plate (*Figure 31*).



*Figure 30 (Left) The Cowper sanctuary railings showing the projecting wall fixing. This was originally embedded in timber panelling.*

*Figure 31 (Right) The brass plate in the centre of the floor of the Cowper sanctuary enclosure.*

The grave/sanctuary area is screened off with a continuous wrought iron railing (*Figure 30*). As a feature within the church as a whole this screened off area is relatively small. However, as part of the proposed Cowper Room it makes up a significant proportion and is also the focal point for the space. While it is possible for someone with long legs to step over (gingerly!), the area is essentially inaccessible. Clearly this was intended as a sign of respect. However the area will always need accessing from time to time and the absence of a gate does not mean that it is not accessed, it just makes it difficult.

The proposal is therefore to adapt the railings to create a gate by modifying the existing railing at the right-hand end. This involves creating simple flat hinges against the wall at each of the rails, removing the right hand bun foot to allow the gate to swing and introducing a narrow stile to terminate the gate. The gate would be secured with a un obtrusive sliding bolt. The aim is to allow access to the screened off area for purposes of cleaning and maintenance, erecting temporary displays/exhibitions and putting flower arrangements in the iron flower stands. All these activities are likely to take place whether or not a gate is provided but it seems likely that if access is not provided and the space has no constructive potential uses, it is more likely to be used for a less respectful uses, such as storage. While clearly this work requires some modification to historic fabric, as the gate will facilitate improved care and presentation of the space, the resulting heritage impact is considered to be **low**.



## Organ

The present organ at St Nicholas' Dereham is a substantial 3-manual tracker action instrument. The organ was originally built for Rougham Hall, near Castle Acre, and was moved to the West Gallery in Dereham in 1785. It was then rebuilt and augmented in the same location in 1827 before being moved and rebuilt in the south Transept by Hill & Son in 1875 when new choir stalls were also created in the crossing under the tower. The organ was cleaned by Hill, Norman & Beard in 1964 before being moved, rebuilt and augmented again in the North Transept in 1994 by Richard Bower (organ builder) with a new chair organ added to house the oldest pipework from the Rougham Hall organ. Richard Bower is the current church organist and continues to look after the organ.

The organ casework is centred on the north tower arch and the arch from the north aisle into the north transept and is built off the floor on a structural steel base supported on brick piers. The current North transept location was intended to allow the choir to be located in the Eastern end of the North aisle so that the nave altar could be placed centrally under the tower. In practice, the altar has been moved forward to be west of the tower (for improved sight-lines) and the choir (when present) has tended to be seated behind the altar, under the tower instead. This arrangement is not ideal acoustically.

It is largely the position of the organ in the church that creates the negative and semi-redundant spaces that provide the rationale behind this project. As stated above, it therefore seems appropriate that the existing works should not be significantly more substantial or permanent than the organ.

The working organ and casework are unaffected by the proposals. The screening of the Cowper Room and enclosure of the toilets may tend to improve the acoustics for the organ. The main impact on the organ is the potential need for minor adjustments to the oak-faced chair organ platform in order to maximise the width of the access route from the north aisle to the new toilets.

While there is ample width above skirting level (c. 900mm), at floor level the width is currently only 620mm, which is too narrow for many wheelchairs and pushchairs, meaning that such users would have to circumnavigate the church and access the toilets via the Cowper Room. While this would be fine for normal church visitors there are highly likely to be occasions when this is seriously inconvenient. E.g. audience members wanting to access the toilets during a concert interval when the Cowper Room is being used as a green room for the performers.



*Figure 32 The western end of the organ platform with the western apron piece removed showing the brick pier and steel framing within. The oak board on the left-hand side would be moved in to tightly abut the steel box section.*

Therefore, in order not to compromise the new facilities, the work proposed includes trimming back the chipboard platform deck and modern brick piers and re-fitting the oak platform apron timber as close as possible to the structural steel framing (see Figure 32), gaining approximately 70mm of additional width at

skirting level and increasing the clear width at the constriction from 620mm to 690mm. This would be done to both sides of the organ platform to preserve the symmetry. 690mm is just an inch narrower than the clear opening of a typical modern domestic door and so it is likely to be sufficient in most instances, especially as the space quickly widens above floor level. The fabric affected is all modern (1994) and the impact on the organ is considered to be **very low** while the benefit in not compromising the new provision is substantial.

A proposal to create an additional 105mm level floor width on the northern side of the arch by neatly trimming back the stone base of the adjacent stone pier arch base, which is historic but has already been trimmed back on one side and appears to have been repaired with mortar on the top face, was supported by members of the DAC. However, the statutory consultees did not think that this alteration was sufficiently justified and so this work has been omitted from the project. While approval is still sought for the change to the organ platform, it is possible that this element of the work will not in practice be executed if it is felt that the access is sufficient.



## Services

The services involved in the current project are:

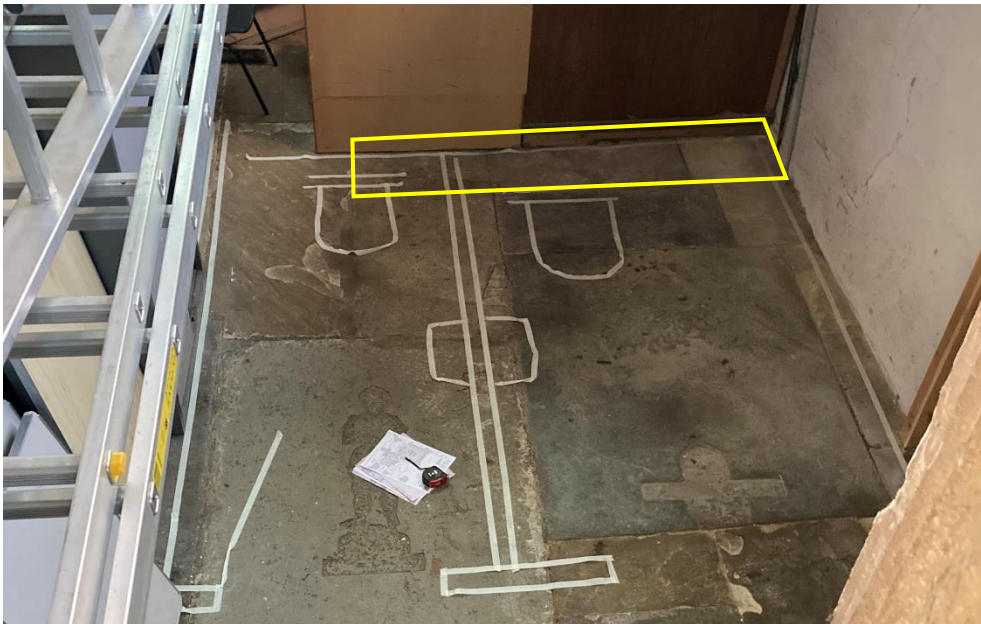
- Water supplies
- Foul drainage
- Ventilation
- Heating
- Power and lighting

### Water supplies

There is an existing mains water supply to the church which rises to a stopcock in the east wall of the St George's Chapel. From here, the water supply extends in existing pipework under the floor to the Vestry (boiler room) via the Eastern Crossing and the southern end of the Cowper Chapel. The intention is to intercept the cold water supply in the Cowper Chapel and extend it under the relaid floor to the floor voids below the kitchenette and WC pod. The pipe routes will follow existing underfloor pipework routes and there will be no additional disruption to the floor due to the water pipework, therefore the impact is considered to be **neutral**.

### Foul drainage

Foul drainage connections need to extend from the new kitchenette sink and new sanitary fittings to the existing Anglian Water sewer that runs along the north side of the churchyard. Within the church, the pipework would be run within the floor voids of the kitchenette and toilet pods. If additional depth is needed to achieve the necessary falls, this would be at the point just before where it leaves the building. The slabs in this location are not inscribed, the floor generally is of relatively poor quality and the slabs are of no individual significance (*figure 33*).



*Figure 33 The floor below the proposed toilet pods with toilet pods roughly marked out. The area bounded by the yellow box may need to be taken up to achieve the necessary drainage falls but will be left in situ if possible.*

The soil pipe would pass directly through the wall at low level, emerging below ground level externally. The hole would be core drilled to minimise disturbance to the fabric and provide an accurate fit for the pipe which would then have a flexible/rocker joint externally. The impact on significant historic fabric would be **low**.



*Figure 34 The route of the underground pipework from the church. No pipework would be visible above ground. Also showing the anticipated position of the toilet extract grille (in orange) which would be in black painted cast iron*

The pipework route across the graveyard would avoid all marked graves and would not affect the chest tomb outside the North Transept (*figure 34*). It will follow immediately beside the existing public footpath. While any excavation in a medieval churchyard is likely to disturb unmarked graves, this route is as convenient and low impact as one could hope to expect.

### Ventilation

Since the lavatories will have no opening windows, they will require mechanical ventilation. This is to be achieved by means of a 'silent' running inline extract fan mounted next to the plinth of the monument on the window stone window cill to prevent any risk of creating resonant vibrations within the toilet pod structure. Here, it is accessible for maintenance or replacement but will be hidden but the roof of the toilet pod which extends a little higher than the window cill (as shown on drawing SND21.24). The external extract cover would be a traditional cast iron grille located within the masonry infill at the bottom of the original window opening (*figure 34*). The fill to these windows appears to have been present since at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century although historic images show that the fill in the Cowper Chapel has been altered since 1800. The introduction of a necessary ventilation grille through this conveniently thin wall build-up is considered to be of **low impact**.

The kitchenette will be fitted with a sealed tank boiling water tap to minimise the amount of steam produced by boiling kettles and urns. No cooking facilities are proposed and so there is unlikely to be a significant increase in humidity over existing activities within the church.

Low-level background ventilation between internal spaces is provided by means of gaps below doors. Ventilation of the higher level volume within the Cowper Room is discussed under ceilings/roofs, above.

### Heating

The existing church heating is by fan-assisted convector heaters, liberally distributed around the church, combined with pew heaters within the main area of nave pews, all fed by hotwater from a large gas boiler located in the Vestry. These measures are believed to have replaced earlier floor heating channels and a coal

fired boiler located in a lean-to on the southwest corner of the church. A number of the existing convector heaters are not operational and in need of replacement.

The Norwich Diocesan Heating advisor (DHA), Adam Simpson, advised that within the main body of the church, modern replacements for the existing emitters were still likely to be the most effective form of heating. Simply replacing existing emitters would allow re-use of the existing underfloor pipework and if sized appropriately for a lower output temperature, would also be suitable for a greener heat source in the future (e.g. a ground-source heat-pump). The church controls an area of former allotments immediately to the west of the churchyard where a bore-hole type ground source heat-pump with plant building could be installed in the future. The roof pitches and relatively low visibility of the roof also mean that there may well be scope for solar generation in the future, together making a coherent future heating strategy. Changes to the main church heating do not form part of the current proposals and this information is included as background information only.

For the Cowper Room, due the height of the space and the desire for this space to be capable of being heated separately with a faster heating response time, and in view of the potential sensitivity of the painted 15<sup>th</sup> Century roof, the DHA suggested that the best option would be a radiant heating option, ideally in conjunction with a destratification fan (that comes on when the heating is in use) to ensure that any convected heat is effectively distributed around the volume.

In this location it was felt that the higher level glowing type were less suitable and that the most comfortable environment would be achieved by non-glowing radiant panels fixed at low level, distributed (as far as possible) around the margins of the space. The proposed system consists of a series of plain rectangular (portrait) heating panels fixed to the masonry walls and new timber screen, such as the Redwell heating panel shown below (*figure 35*). These can be printed or painted with graphics and so would double-up as interpretation panels. Six of the panels would require fixing to the masonry walls although two would replace existing convector heaters. Wiring would be run in a new duct below the relaid floor and would rise in short chases (approximately 300-400mm) up from floor level in the lime plaster. There are already pipework connections in this approximate location and some damaged areas of plaster that are due to be replaced as part of the works. The additional impact of fitting these heaters to historic fabric is therefore **low**. Visually, there will be some improvement from the removal of the two existing convector heaters. Most viable heating options will have some visual impact and the intention is to make the new heaters 'hidden in plain sight'. With the potential for enhanced interpretation of the Cowper memorial (and/or other features), the impact of the visual impact in the space is open to interpretation and personal preferences and could range from **low harm** to **moderate beneficial**. (*see Figure 35*)



*Figure 35 An example of a Redwell radiant panel heater with printed graphics (used in landscape orientation).*





*Figure 36 The East wall of the Cowper Room showing the proposed arrangement of radiant panel heaters that will also function as interpretation panels of the life and writings of William Cowper.*

## Power and lighting

Within the new timber walls, power will be distributed within the wall and floor voids/structure and will have no impact on historic fabric. New underfloor ducts will be provided along the northern margin of the relaid Cowper Room floor and across the room in the same location as the existing pipework run, with access covers at the intersections providing easy connection points/future-proofing. The power wiring will have very low-neutral impact on historic fabric.

At present the church is lit with highlevel wall-mounted spotlights, mostly located in internal corners above arch springing levels. The existing lighting is basic space lighting for activities taking place at ground level but does little for the significant heritage features located within this part of the church. Within the bounds of the project, there is clear potential to improve the presentation of some of the most significant architectural features in the church through improved architectural lighting. These include the two Tudor ceilings, the war memorial screen, Cowper memorial and these spaces generally which form the backdrop to liturgical activities taking place in the nave. There is therefore significant potential for enhancement of the significance through replacement lighting.

The proposed new lighting uses existing lighting positions and wiring where installed on historic fabric and, where possible, makes use of the new structure, notably the hidden uplights that will light the Tudor ceiling and military standards in the St George's Chapel. The new energy efficient LED lights are 'warm white' but will have a high colour rendering index (CRI), bringing out the natural colours of the painted ceilings, screen and standards but have an extremely low UV component that could damage natural pigments. The lighting would be fully dimmable and individually controllable (when required) providing the ability to highlight individual features and create dramatic ambient lighting effects. While the lighting may require some additional local fixings into low significance rendered finishes and mortar joints, the net effect of the lighting is likely to result in a significant enhancement in the presentation of the most significant heritage elements.

## Conclusions

For the level of facility being provided within the main body of an important medieval church, the heritage impact of these proposals is very low and balances minor harm to low significance historic fabric with some heritage gains, all outweighed by the substantial benefits of the new facilities to both the current community and the church's future viability.

The works do require relaying the stone floor of the Cowper Chapel to its 18<sup>th</sup> century level arrangement in order to create a more useable space for setting up tables and chairs (without having them all on an incline), avoiding visually uncomfortable tapering gaps under new doors, and creating an accessible transition to the overlaid floor of the toilet and kitchen pod areas. It allows new service routes to be laid without having them on show. It also ensures that the ledger slabs remain open to view and is better than an alternative that leaves them undisturbed but covered up. While the least reversible of the changes proposed, it is change that makes sense in the space irrespective of these specific proposals.

The wall monuments are not directly affected by the proposals but their context is altered. This is a process that has been taking place for generations with the relocation of the font from away from this area in 1884, the relocation of the organ to the North Transept in 1994 and the subsequent erection of plywood screen enclosing some of the monuments within the church storage area. In this context, the proposed alterations do very little or no additional harm to the context of the wall monuments, and indeed represent an improvement in setting of those located within the Cowper Room.

The painted Tudor ceilings are the most sensitive of the heritage features in this part of the building and the proposals go to some lengths to maintain an internal climate for the Cowper Chapel ceiling that is the same as, or improves upon, the existing. At the same time, improved LED architectural lighting will allow these fine features and the war memorial screen to be better appreciated while not being subjected to potentially harmful heat and light, and new interpretation will also allow the Cowper Room to bring to life one of the church's most forward-thinking and prominent past congregants and reinterpret his work and relevance to our present time.

10/08/2023

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