



St Lawrence Church

LECHLADE-ON-THAMES



Lechlade St Lawrence PCC

Version 2

May 2023

Supporting document to the faculty submission in response to the DAC Report dated 31st March 2022

This paper is our response to the DAC request to reconsider the use of stone for the new floor design

Proposals to construct a new stone floor in the nave

1. This document has been prepared in response to the observation at the DAC meeting on 7th April 2022 (included with its Summary Report dated 31st March 2022)

While the Committee Members have indicated that they would support the proposal to raise the floor (12 Members voted for and 1 against), they unanimously agreed that in light of Historic England's advice, which elaborated on the cumulative impact of the proposed reordering on the significance of the church, they would like the PCC to reconsider using stone throughout. Instead, other floor finishes should be investigated, for instance a replica tiled floor which would help to preserve the character of the Victorian reordering and should be as successful as a finish as the proposed stone. Mr Guy of Historic England indicated that this could be an acceptable compromise. The PCC were encouraged to familiarise themselves with the relevant recent ruling from Oxford Diocese:

<https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/news/surprise-ruling-in-case-of-g-e-streets-st-mary-the-virgin-wheatley-oxfordshire>

2. The DAC document dated 31st March 2022 commented that and that the committee agreed with one exception (related to the choir screen, considered in a separate note)

Raising the floor and replacement of tiles with stone – The consultees' comments were considered, but the DAC delegation's opinion was that the proposal for a new stone floor finish on a higher level was argued well and could be recommended. It was pointed out that Waller reduced the floor level in 1882 and it is proposed to bring it back to the pre-Victorian reordering level. The existing floor will need lifting to accommodate the underfloor heating. Raising the floor throughout the building will also make it more accessible.

3. We have considered the suggestion from the DAC, on the advice of Historic England with reference to the ruling of the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Oxford dated 21st November 2021. We have consulted with our archaeological advisor, Mr Chiz Harward, and our architect Mr Richard Codd. Our views are set out below.

History and significance of St Lawrence church

4. St Lawrence church is one of the Gloucestershire wool churches, wholly perpendicular built of dressed freestone from Taynton¹. David Verey continues to describe at length the remarkable features of the perpendicular church but only makes passing reference to Richard Pace reordering in 1829 and the F S Waller and Son reordering in 1881.

¹ Gloucestershire: the Cotswolds, Verey D, 1970

5. The HER record² for the Grade 1 church provides a detailed description of the perpendicular design and features and again makes only passing reference to the reordering by F S Waller and Son. None of the Victorian additions – the floors, screen, choir and nave pews are mentioned in the listing. The listing includes the 1902 Reredos by Rogers and the 1923 communion rail by Jewson but there is no inclusion of the F S Waller and Son design features.
6. The Pace reordering in 1829 included box pews throughout the nave and both north and south aisles. Photographs show a stone floor down the central aisle of the nave. It is likely that the north and south aisles had similar stone floors.
7. The north porch retains its stone floor as part of its construction in the 16th Century. While there is little information on the floor construction in the nave before the Pace reordering, there is evidence of several ledgerstones which were removed from the nave by F S Waller and Son and placed in the west porch. Bigland³ provides a detailed inventory of the monuments on the walls and flat stones on the floor of the many interments within the church. The 1881 works, prepared and supervised by F S Waller, specified the careful and reverently removal of all burials within the church.
8. Other famous wool churches in the Cotswolds including St Mary's Fairford, St John the Baptist Cirencester and St Peter & Paul, Northleach retain the original or replaced stone floors.
9. Our design philosophy is to restore the nave and both north and south aisles to reflect the magnificent perpendicular design features which are detailed in the David Verey publication and the HER listing.
10. The current nave and aisle floors have a geometric design along the aisles and plain quarry tiles under the existing pews. The Statement of Significance describes the typical late Victorian tiles in the nave as having no intrinsic merit and are considered to have low to moderate significance (Low-moderate is defined as 'of local value' following national definitions)⁴. There are encaustic tiles in the chancel, part of the F S Waller and Son reordering which have a moderate significance and are to be retained as are geometric tiling in the area.

St Mary the Virgin, Wheatley

11. The DAC referred us to the recent judgement⁵ of the Chancellor of the Oxford Diocese in relation to the proposed removal of floor tiles at the church.
12. St Mary the Virgin is a Grade 2 listed church designed by GE Street and constructed in 1857. This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest. It is good example of the architect G E Street who was a leading practitioner of the Victorian gothic revival. The church was constructed in 1857, the south porch added in 1887 and the west tower completed in 1888.

² HER Record 8202

³ Historic Monuments and Genealogical Collection of the County of Gloucester, Bigland 1792 (reprint 1990)

⁴ Statement of Significance Part 2, Project Inspire Working Group, Chiz Harward BA MCIfA

⁵ St Mary the Virgin, Wheatley, Judgement of the Consistory Court, Diocese of Oxford, November 2021

13. The tiles cover the central, north and south aisles and part of the east end of the nave. The areas under the existing pews have timber floors; a carpet covers much of the west end of the church. They are of red and black colouring and about one inch (25mm) thick. The 4-inch square tiles have lifted in several areas, are loose and mortar joints are missing. Few tiles appear to be cracked. The 4-inch square floor tiles in the aisles at St Lawrence are ½ inch (12mm) thick and the 150mm square quarry tiles under the pews are 3/8 inch (10mm) thick and the extent of cracking is much greater than at St Mary's. Photographs of the tiles are shown in Appendix B. This would be expected with thinner and lower strength tiles.
14. The Wheatley PCC proposed to replace the original tiled floor in the nave with natural stone to which the Victorian Society objected. The faculty application was then subject to a Consistory Court hearing and judgement. The judgement required the PCC to

*'select and arrange for the re-laying of as many of Street's original tiles as can be salvaged, and to commission as many suitable reproduction tiles as are required, to replicate Street's original design for the nave floor. However I recognise that this may prove to be difficult or impracticable. In this event, the court may be prepared to limit the Street tiled flooring to the central aisle and the north and west ends of the nave, leaving the north and south aisles to be covered by a stone surface.'*⁶

15. We understand that further work has been carried out by the PCC architects and in the November 2022 minutes of the Oxford Diocese DAC meeting, the DAC confirmed their support for the preferred option of the provision of a new stone floor.⁷ There appears to be further discussions with the Chancellor practical solutions.

The DAC re-iterated their support for Option 4 (all new stone floor to design by Brocklehurst Architects in collaboration with Artorius Faber) and supplemented this by also supporting Option 3 (a new stone floor with the creation of a tiled east to west central aisle).

Alternative floor surfaces

16. Our proposal for a new stone floor at a higher level than existing to accommodate underfloor heating and provide level access through the church from the north porch to the communion rail has been accepted by the DAC. The comment raised related to the selection of floor material. We have taken into account the Church Buildings Council Guidance⁸. advice on floor selection should consider the following factors. We have applied the following criteria.
- a. High compressive strength and hard wearing;
 - b. A design life of at least 100 years with minimal maintenance;
 - c. A light colour to be compatible with the adjacent pillars and walls and to give the ambiance of a light open space;

⁶ St Mary the Virgin, Wheatley, Judgement of the Consistory Court, Diocese of Oxford, November 2021

⁷ Wheatley, St Mary the Virgin 2017-009381 Dorchester Grade II*, Oxford DAC minutes, November 2022, Oxford Diocese website

⁸ Historic Floors Guidance Note, Churchcare, undated

- d. Compatible with underfloor heating;
 - e. Easily cleaned;
 - f. No specific demarcation within the floor surface to be compatible with flexible use of the space
17. Our architect, Chedburn Codd, advised us that stone floors are predominantly used in recent church restoration work. This is confirmed from our recent searches of reordered churches in the region; details are presented in Appendix A.
18. Timber is an alternative but is rarely used for large floor areas; is less effective with underfloor heating, less hard wearing and more difficult to clean.
19. Our long experience of the existing quarry tile floor is that it is damaged in several areas, some tiles have cracked and other have lifted. We had an opportunity in September 2022 to inspect the floor in detail when all the pews were removed for the children's Holiday Club and the Mission. We have included photographs on Appendix B. These show that several areas of tiling have cracked or have lifted. The church maintenance book records regular replacement of tiling over the last five decades. Over this period, pews were generally left in place. In addition, areas of the coloured tiling in the aisles have suffered damage from point loading and general wear. With the replacement of many tiles over the decades, the extent of the remaining original tiles is in question. The practicalities of removing sufficient original tiles in reasonable condition and removing mortar on the underside is questionable. We concluded that the quarry tiles do not meet the hard-wearing criteria in areas with high footfall and chair movements.
20. We asked Chedburn Codd to advise us on possible use of a small proportion of coloured tiles within the nave and aisles. Possible options did not meet the criteria for no demarcations and their hardwearing there is likely to be high footfall and chair movement.
21. We concluded that a Purbeck stone floor meets the criteria for the floor design and have based our proposals on this selection. The choice of Purbeck stone was made on the basis that it is hard-wearing, relatively light colouring, absorbs sound, is cost effective and, as such, would best meet the needs the criteria, thus making the building suitable for a wide range of activities for the whole community. In addition, the colouring of the stone is in keeping with the adjacent stone walls and pillars. The floor design is not to include any pre-determined designs so as to allow flexibility of use for worship and events to accommodate the differing seating and table arrangements shown by the architect. Our selection of the stone is supported by the predominant use of the same or similar stone in other churches. The colour of the stone was selected on advice from Artorius Faber who have supplied stone to many churches.
22. Our proposal for a Purbeck stone floor was based on the criteria in paragraph 15 above and based on use of the same and similar stone in other churches with underfloor heating and on the advice of Artorius Faber, an experienced stone supplier.

Practical considerations

23. From our experience of maintaining the floor, many of the tiles are cracked or chipped, and are easily damaged on removal and cleaning of mortar from the underside. With over 6000 tiles, the work would be time consuming incurring additional cost and time both in removal and relaying within a stone floor.

Additional costs

24. Additional costs will be incurred in relaying some of the quarry tiles in the aisles including recovery of the existing tiles, inspection and removal of any mortar on the underside and laying costs. There would be additional costs in the stone floor laying, working to four additional breaks in the stone pattern which would increase wastage and laying time. Based on our project estimates this would increase costs by between £25,000 and £35,000 which would place greater pressure on our costs.

Retaining elements of the Victorian design

25. We have responded to comments from the Church Buildings Council in its letter dated 22nd December 2021 and other consultees concerning the chancel and side chapel. The initial proposal was to reorder the chancel to include new choir pews. For this faculty submission, we are now proposing to retain the chancel area, side screens and Waller-designed choir furniture; this includes retaining the encaustic tiles in the chancel. These are all elements of the Victorian 1882 reordering. We are also retaining the side (Blaise) chapel which was consecrated in the 1954.
26. There is a suggestion from English Heritage that the whole of the quarry tiled floor in the nave and aisles be replicated in the new floor to reflect the character of the Victorian reordering. While the tiling in the chancel is of moderate significance because of the design of the encaustic tiles, the quarry tiles in the nave have a low to moderate significance. We are retaining the chancel area to represent the Victorian reordering, which covered a short period of the life of the church.
27. To replace some of the tiles within the nave could be considered a pastiche and would not represent the use of the church over its over 500 year life. The proposal may be appropriate in a Victorian-designed church but we consider this would be incongruous in a 15th Century church. In one recent judgement at St Nicholas, Great Bookham, the Chancellor commented that (in relation to pew removal but the same concept applies):

The Chancellor decided that a mixture of modern chairs and 19th century pews would look incongruous and not serve the ambitions of the church to engage more with the community: ... in seeking to serve two masters, present needs and past aesthetics, there is the risk that it properly serves neither'.⁹

At St Philip and St James Leckhampton, the Chancellor wrote:

⁹ Judgement, St Nicholas, Great Bookham, Guildford Diocese, 2022

Were this church to be an outstanding and singular example of [Middleton's] work, I might have found otherwise. It is a competent set piece, but there are other examples of his work. The fact of it being a good example of his work does not justify its unaltered continuation substantially unaltered if the needs and wishes of the worshipping congregation justify the change they want.¹⁰

Summary

28. We have reconsidered the use of stone throughout the church. We have set out the criteria used to select the floor design and tested appropriate materials, we have concluded that:
- (i) There is a clear need for a lighter and welcoming space with no demarcations to achieve an open flexible space to support the flexible worship and mission of the church as set out in the Statement of Need;
 - (ii) The Statement of Significance describes the typical late Victorian tiles in the nave as low to moderate significance;
 - (iii) The proposed Purbeck stone addresses the need for a lighter and more welcoming space for flexible worship and use of the nave;
 - (iv) The stone design with no demarcation of areas also enables flexible use of the nave and aisles;
 - (v) The use of recycled quarry tiles or similar does not provide a light colour to reflect an open and welcoming space. Our experience of maintaining and replacing many of the tiles over recent decades show that the design does not meet the requirement for minimal maintenance.
 - (vi) Chedburn Codd looked at design options for use of some tiles but these did not meet our criteria.
29. We have recognised the need to include significant elements of the Victorian design in the reordering. Our design retains the chancel including the decorative encaustic tiles, choir pews and side screens.
30. The proposals for St Mary the Virgin, Wheatley, are based on a complete Victorian church design by G E Street where the balance of harm and need differs significantly from the situation at St Lawrence. Here, we are seeking to restore the nave and aisles to reflect the impressive perpendicular design of the building where we consider the need for worship, mission and community events outweigh any harm to the low to moderate tiled floor design.

¹⁰ Judgement, St Philip and St James, Leckhampton, Gloucester Diocese, 2018

Appendix A – Other reordered churches in the region with stone floors

All these recently reordered churches have stone floors.

St Philip and St James, Leckhampton,

St. Lawrence Bourton on-the-Water,

Holy Trinity, Bradford on Avon,

Holy Trinity, Minchinhampton,

St. Mary Magdalene, Hullavington,

St. Michael's, Highworth (recently reordered).

St John the Baptist, Cirencester,

St. Nicholas, Chadlington,

Appendix A – Comparison of aisle floor tiles

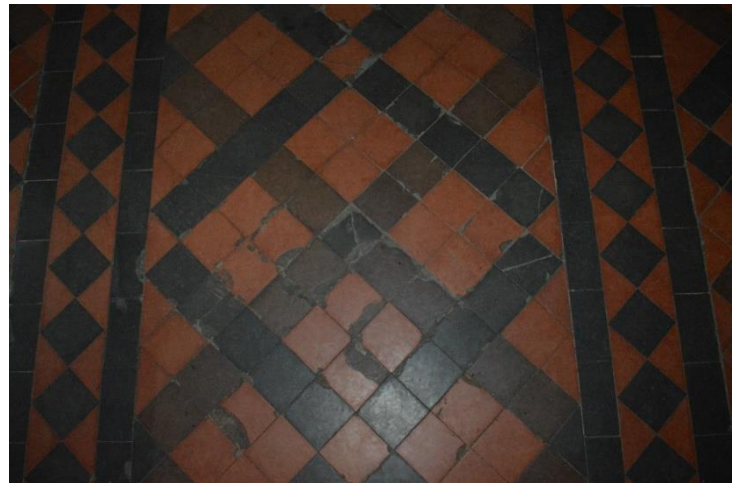
St Mary the Virgin,
Wheatley – the tiles are
one inch thick



St Lawrence Lechlade – the tiles in the aisles are ½
inch thick. Tiles under the pews are thinner

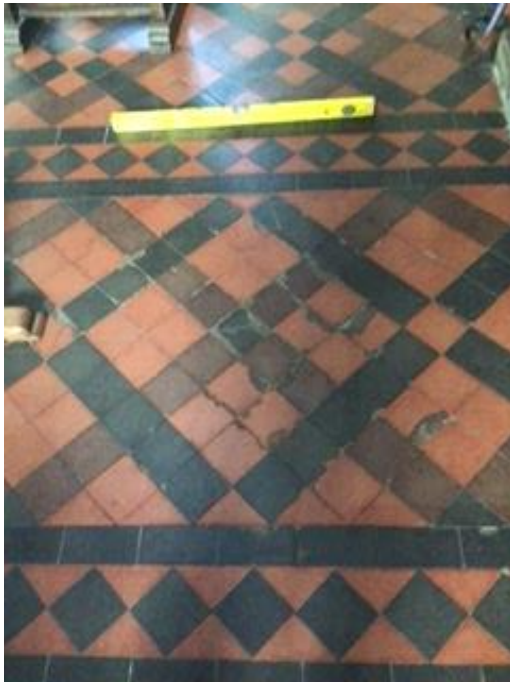
Appendix C – St Lawrence church: photographs of the existing quarry tiles in the nave

There is a long history of tiles becoming loose in several places with some lifting and cracking.¹¹ Remedial works have been carried out over many years, but the problem continues and there is a risk of tripping over the loose or worn tiles.



¹¹ Parish records





Left: typical damage to clay tile from point loading failure



Many of the tiles are damaged by point loading (see below) or by a lack of adhesion to the limecrete floor.

