

Marches Archaeology

The Church of St Dubricius Whitchurch Herefordshire

SMR number: 32129

A report on recording of a table tomb

December 2003

Marches Archaeology Series 314

This report is produced by

Marches Archaeology

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**The Church of St Dubricius
Whitchurch
Herefordshire**

NGR: SO 5561 1750

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A report on recording of a table tomb

**Report by
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Summary

Conservation work to the Gwillim Memorial in the churchyard of the Church of St Dubricius necessitated the recording of the table tomb within the Memorial complex. A photographic record of the table tomb and coat of arms set in the west wall of the memorial enclosure was made. The inscriptions on the ledgers of the tomb were transcribed.

1 Introduction

Conservation work to the Gwillim Memorial in the churchyard of the Church of St Dubricius, Whitchurch, Herefordshire necessitated the recording of the table tomb within the Memorial complex. Bartosch and Stokes, on behalf of the PCC commissioned the work.

The Gwillim Memorial lies to the north west of the church (Plate 1). The memorial consists of a table tomb surrounded by grave slabs set within a walled enclosure. The back wall of the memorial complex has the family coat of arms and a niche set within it.

Archaeological work has been carried out inside the church and further work is expected.

2 Archaeological background

The dedication of the church was amended to St Dubricius [St Dyfrig] before 1325. Previously it had been dedicated to St Gwynnog (Coplestone-Crow, 1989, 206). Both dedications are very early and may suggest the use of the site as a church has British (i.e. pre-Saxon) origins.

The church currently on the site (County Sites and Monuments Record [SMR] reference: HSM 06773) does not appear to contain any fabric earlier than at least the thirteenth century and was largely rebuilt in the fourteenth century (RCHM, 1931, 253; Pevsner, 1963, 319).

Within the churchyard are remains of a fifteenth century cross which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (HSM 06398).

The Gwillim Memorial was built by Thomas Gwillim in 1744. The Gwillim family owned the Old Court in Whitchurch from 1600 to 1868 and Thomas Gwillim inherited the Court in 1727. He was married to Elizabeth Steward whose sister Ann contributed to the grave

enclosure and was interred there in 1757. Other members of the family buried there include Thomas and Elizabeth's daughters Henrietta Maria and Sophia.

3 Methodology

A site visit was carried out on 14th October 2003. The west wall of the Gwillim memorial was scaffolded, obscuring some of the detail. A photographic record of the table tomb and coat of arms set in the west wall of the memorial enclosure was made. Medium format black and white negatives and 35mm colour transparencies were used. Measurements of the dimensions of the tomb were taken and transcriptions of the ledgers on the table tomb were made.

4 Recording of the memorial

The memorial enclosure is built of locally sourced ashlar stonework. It is entered from the east and the west wall is treated architecturally. The top of this wall has a central open pediment with the Gwillim coat of arms set centrally in the frieze below (Plate 2). This is supported by curved consoles with foliate decoration. Scallops on S scrolls and further horizontal consoles extend the architectural treatment of the wall top.

Set centrally in the wall, below the Gwillim arms, is a semicircular niche, now empty. This has a semi-circular arch with pronounced keystone, supported on fluted pilasters. The stonework between niche and frieze is treated with smooth rustication, as is the niche itself.

The table tomb is central to the memorial enclosure, orientated approximately east to west. At its base it measures 2.03 metres in length and 1.06 metres wide. The height of the monument is 1.09 metres. It is constructed of a greyish brown sandstone that was probably quarried locally. The east facing side of the tomb bears another Gwillim coat of arms and carvings of artist's palette and paintbrushes to the left and set square, dividers and other scientific tools to the right, presumably representing the Arts and Sciences (Plate 3). Each of the other three sides has a central *momento mori* (Plate 4). On the long sides these are flanked and surmounted by florid foliage issuing from scallops. This motif is repeated on the bracket corners of the tomb, which have foliage surmounted by a large scallop. The surround of the tomb lid is also treated with foliage. The three inscribed panels have been inset into the sides of the tomb and are of marble. The marble is inlaid with lead letters forming the inscriptions.

Inscription of the south facing side of the table tomb

In Memory of that excellent Lady
Mrs. ELIZABETH STUART,
who died the 17 th. of Jan. 1743. Aged 71 Years.
She was widow of ELMES STUART Esq. daughter of
JOHN CREED Esq. Secretary of Tangiers to
King CHARLES the 2 nd. grand-daughter of
Sir GILT^T PICKERING Bart. grt.grand-daughter of
Sir SIDNEY MONTAGU Knt. Master of Requests
to King CHARLES the 1 st. who was father of

EDW. Earl of Sandwich, and of Lady PICKERING.

Inscription of the west facing side of the table tomb

Here also lieth the Body of
JASPER GWILLIM,
her Grandson, who died June 24. 1743,
Aged 12 Yrs. and 4 Months.
As they were lovely and pleasant in
their lives so in their Deaths they
were not divided.
This youth was unfortunately
drowned in this River endeavouring
to save his sinking schoolfellow
and friend.

Inscription of the north facing side of the table tomb

She stretched forth her hands to the poor;
she opened her mouth with wisdom; and in
her tongue was the law of kindness.
She left three daughters, ELIZABETH, Wife of
THOMAS GWILLIM Esq. Mrs. ANNE STUART
(at whose joint expense this Monument
was erected) and JEMIMA, Wife of
ELMES SPINCKE Esq.

Inscription below the coat of arms surmounting the west wall of the memorial enclosure

Impensis
Thomæ Gwillim Arini^o et
Elizab^æ uxoris suæ A D 1714

5 Bibliography

Coplestone-Crow, B, 1989, *Herefordshire Place-Names*, British Archaeological Reports
British Series 214

Pevsner, N, 1963, *The Buildings of England - Herefordshire*, Penguin

RCHM, 1931, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Herefordshire: Vol. 1 -
South-west*, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record

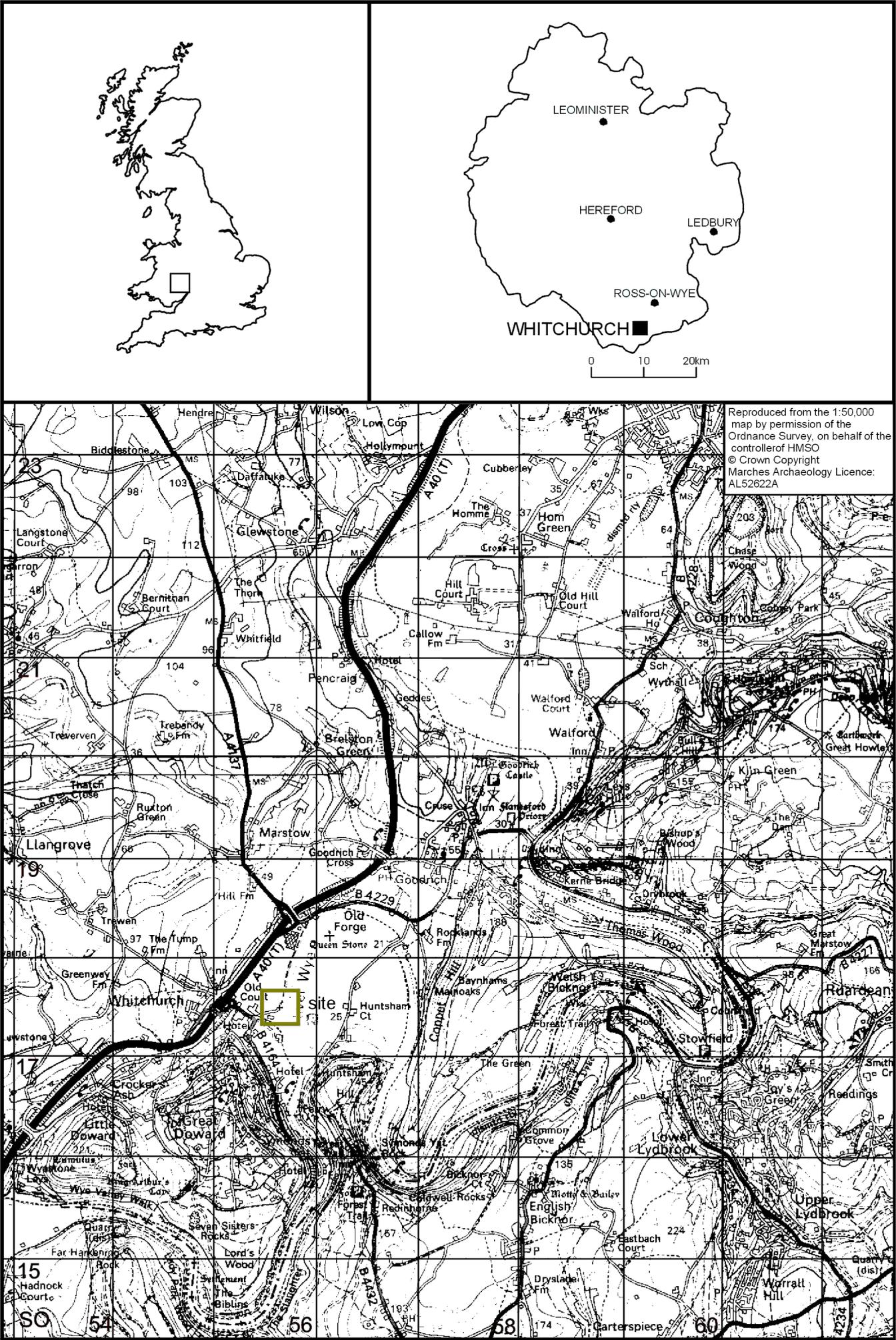
6 The archive

The archive is currently held in the offices of Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to Herefordshire Heritage Services.

The archive consists of:

- 3 photographic index sheets
- 2 sheets of black and white negatives
- 1 sheet of colour transparencies
- 3 sheets of site notes

The site code is SDW03A



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Fig. 1 Location of the site



Plate 1 The Gwillim Memorial



Plate 2 The family Coat of Arms

Addendum to MAS 314

The four ledgers set into the floor of the Gwillim Memorial were transcribed on 23rd December 2003. Ledger 1 is situated directly to the south of the table tomb. Ledger 2 is on the northern side of the table tomb, ledger 3 is to the north of ledger 2 and ledger 4 is between ledger 3 and the north wall of the Gwillim memorial. The inscriptions were at the top (west) of the ledgers.

Scaffolding planks obscured some of the inscriptions and part of the inscription on ledger 3 was illegible. Words or parts of words in red are where the inscription was obscured but a likely interpretation has been made. When no deduction could be made of the obscured word the space for the word is in red brackets. The illegible text on ledger 3 is shown as a black bracket for each word.

Ledger 1

HERE
Lieth the body of
M^{is} Anne Stuart ()
Departed this life July
The 2^d 1757

Ledger 2

HERE
Lieth the body of
Thomas Gwillim Esq
AND
Mrs Elizabeth his wife
He departed this life
November the 5 th 1766
Aged 70 Years
She departed this life
July the 4 th 1767
Aged 71 Years

Ledger 3

HERE
Lieth the body of Mrs
Henrietta Maria Gwillim
Second Daughter of
Thomas Gwillim Esq
And Elizabeth his wife
who departed this life
June the 25 th 1785
Aged 58 Years
The () of the ()
()()()()

Ledger 4

HERE
Lies the body of
ELIZABETH SOPHIA
Elder daughter of
THOMAS GWILLIM
& ELIZABETH his wife who
Departed this life August 6
Anno Domini ()
The Just Shall Live ()
Hebrews Chapter ()