

**THE JERICHO PARLOUR AND ITS
UNDERCROFT,
WESTMINSTER ABBEY**

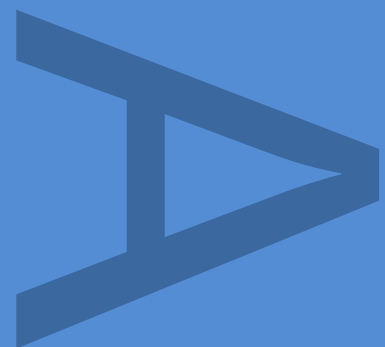
**SUMMARY REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF**

*Conducted during preparatory work for
the installation of a new dumbwaiter*

SITE CODE: JCR12

PCA REPORT NO: 11071

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PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY


DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

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SUMMARY REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF

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The Jericho Parlour and its Undercroft, Westminster Abbey
Summary Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief

Conducted during preparatory work for the installation of a new dumbwaiter

Site Code: JCR12

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, October 2012

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October 2012

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Malcolm Reading Consultants acting on behalf of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey to carry out an archaeological watching brief on areas to be impacted by the installation of a dumbwaiter between the Jericho Parlour and the kitchen to be constructed in the undercroft.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was carried out by the author under the project management of Chris Mayo of Pre-Construct Archaeology and monitored on behalf of the Dean and Chapter by the consultant archaeologist to Westminster Abbey, Professor Warwick Rodwell. The following brief report outlines the results of the watching brief.
- 1.3 The study site was located within the northern range of the present deanery, formally the abbot's house. It comprised a number of rooms, mostly located within the undercroft of the Jericho Parlour created in the early 16th century by Abbot Islip. The range is part of a complex of buildings and rooms that used to make up the abbots residence, which was located along the west cloister walk and extended west beyond the west towers of Westminster Abbey.
- 1.4 The removal of the floor joists in Room 42B was carried out under archaeological supervision and the removed portion of each timber joist was then photographed and recorded. An annotated plan was produced noting general observations, i.e. exposed wall surfaced and masonry features.
- 1.5 The work was on separate occasions on 27th April, 2nd Mar, 4th May and 18th May 2012.
- 1.6 Site records were compiled using the unique site code JCR12. Once finished, the project archive will be deposited with the Westminster Abbey Museum under that code.

2 DISCUSSION BY ROOM

2.1 Room 40

2.1.1 It has been suggested that the Jerusalem Chamber occupies the site of an earlier chamber at least twice its size and that this was demolished in order to erect the southwest tower of the church. This theory is based in part on the fact that the west wall is significantly thicker than the east wall (Robinson 1911). However, this seems unlikely when considering the completeness of the west front of the southwest tower. When the southwest tower was refaced in the mid-14th century the decorative string courses were carried through the entire length of the west front. These mouldings were external decorative elements and were intended to be visible. However, these were obscured with the construction of the Jerusalem Chamber. The lower window of the tower too became partially blocked by the construction of the chamber (Tatton-Brown 1995).

2.2 Rooms 31/32

2.2.1 The lower moulding of the southwest tower comprises a hollow chamfer running along the west and south sides of the tower. On the south side (now in Rooms 31 and 32) the chamfer was removed on the south faces to create a flat offset, perhaps to support the floor of the gallery formerly linking the Jerusalem Chamber with the abbot's residence to the east prior to the construction of the Jericho Parlour. This gallery was at least partially demolished when the Jericho Parlour was constructed in the 16th century. The last remaining part of the former gallery is the thick east-west aligned stone wall between Rooms 32 and 33 to the north and Rooms 34A, 37 and 38 to the south. The interior splay of a now partially blocked window in the south wall attests to the wall's past function as an exterior wall.

2.2.2 When Abbot Islip added the Jericho Parlour in the early 16th century the upper parts of Litlington's gallery were demolished and a new exterior wall constructed further to the south. It was presumably at this time that the upper part of the lower moulding was removed in order to create a slightly higher offset for the floor of the new parlour (the offset supports the current floor).

2.2.3 Comparing the lower offset with the floor levels in the surrounding rooms it seems that it, at 5.32m OD, would have supported a floor closer to the level of the floor in College Hall (5.42m OD) than that in the Jerusalem Chamber (5.92m OD). The higher offset provides the northern support for the current floor (at 5.95m OD) within the Jericho Parlour and the adjoining rooms. To the north the floor joists for the Jericho Parlour floor were resting directly on the upper offset.

2.2.4 The northern wall of the corridor (Rooms 31 and 32) is formed by the south wall of the southwest tower of the church. The lower courses of this wall were constructed using large ashlar blocks of Caen stone which become progressively smaller towards the ceiling of the corridor.

2.2.5 To the south the connection between the floor joists and the south wall was not seen as the ceiling boards in this area were not removed. However, the joists were exposed just south of

the old gallery wall and these seem to align with those exposed and removed for the installation of the new dumbwaiter shaft to the north. This seems to suggest that the joists extend the entire width (north-south) of the Jericho Parlour and rest directly upon the south wall of the old gallery.

- 2.2.6 In Room 32 the existing lath and plaster ceiling was removed, exposing the floor joists in the northwest corner of the recess between the south buttresses of the southwest tower (see Plate 1). The laths were here held in place with metal tacks suggesting that this was not contemporary with the construction of the Jericho Parlour floor above. Presumably the present floor of the Jericho Parlour is contemporary with the room's construction in the early 16th century – at which time wooden pegs would have been used to secure the lath to the joists above. Removal of the ceiling did not reveal any evidence that a ceiling had existed below the joists prior to the existing ceiling, which is presumably of 19th century date.

2.3 Room 37/38

- 2.3.1 The floor joists of the Jericho Parlour were also exposed in the northwest corner of Room 38 in order to allow for an extractor hood to be installed (see Plate 2). Here the 19th century lath and plaster ceiling had been covered in the 20th century by a new ceiling of particle board laid two boards thick. As was the case in Room 32 no evidence of a pre-19th century ceiling was seen. Both in Rooms 32 and 38 the exposed joists measured approximately 100mm in width by 200mm in height – their full length was not seen, but it is assumed that they extend the full width of the Jericho Parlour from north to south.
- 2.3.2 At the western end of the room was a boarded up fireplace. The boards were removed to reveal a Victorian metal fireplace insert filling the inner frame of an earlier, presumably Georgian, fireplace (see Plate 3). Of the earlier feature only the mantle and side trim remains. During the construction of the earlier fireplace the western wall of the room appears to have been largely rebuilt in brick to accommodate a chimney flue. This perhaps suggests that no fireplace existed in this wall when the space was created in the 16th century. While the upper part of the wall was constructed in red fabric bricks the lower part consisted of random rubble coursing.
- 2.3.3 The stonework of the north wall of Room 37/38 was only visible around the doorway towards the east end of the room (see Plate 4) and then only the stones of the jambs and arch head had been left exposed. While no weathering was seen around the arch head both the jambs of the door were heavily weathered. This could suggest that the door predated the construction of the Jericho Parlour, when this was an exterior wall face. The fact that no weathering was seen around the arch suggests that perhaps the upper part of the door was altered when the Jericho Parlour was created. The uppermost block on both the east and west jambs also did not show significant signs of weathering. As already discussed, there is some evidence to suggest that the floor level within the older gallery connecting the Jerusalem Chamber to the eastern part of the abbot's house was lower than that of the Jericho Parlour which replaced it. This could be the reason for the alteration to the door below. If the ceiling above was raised, then a taller doorway could be accommodated, which

could explain the insertion of an additional stone block as well as the arch being replaced.

- 2.3.4 A thin brick partition wall forms the east wall of the room and divides what was originally a larger space encompassing Rooms 37/38 and 34A/B. This had been constructed using bricks and mortar identical to those of the west wall rebuilt suggesting a similar date.
- 2.3.5 The south wall contains two light windows of subtly different styles; the cross section of the mullion of the eastern window is a simple chamfer while that of the western window contains vertical roll moulding. Both windows were altered during the 18th century when they were framed within timber box frames and internal vertical folding shutters were installed.

2.4 R34A/B

- 2.4.1 This space represents the eastern most bay of the Jericho Parlour undercroft. As has already been stated the eastern wall of Rooms 37/38 (the west wall of Rooms 34A/B) was likely erected sometime during the 18th century causing the bay to become isolated from the two bays to the west. Further partition of this space took place when it was converted into a bathroom with an adjoining corridor to the north. This division was achieved by the insertion of a timber partition wall running the length of the space from east to west. Presumably the north, south and east walls of this space are of stone construction, although this could not be confirmed as these walls were clad with acoustic boarding.
- 2.4.2 At the west end of the south wall a small single light window exists within a much larger frame. This is somewhat awkwardly located immediately east of the west wall. It is likely that the window originally extended farther west than it currently does, but the segregation of these rooms from the rest of the undercroft by the construction of the west wall reduced its size. The construction of the exterior staircase leading to the Jericho Parlour lobby (Room 43) blocked the eastern part of the window leaving only room for a single light window. It is probable that a window existed in this location from the time of the construction of the undercroft by Abbot Islip in the 16th century, but due to later alterations and obstructions little of the original window now remains visible.

2.5 Room 42B

- 2.5.1 This space forms part of the Jericho Parlour storage cupboards built into the recess between the south buttresses of the southwest tower. The existing panelling along the east wall of the cupboard was to be removed as were the floorboards and underlying joists in order to accommodate the new dumbwaiter. This allowed for the exposure of the stonework of part of the southwest tower as well as the lath and plaster partition forming the east wall of the cupboard.
- 2.6 As in Room 37/38 below, the stonework of the tower comprised regular courses of large ashlar blocks. Two putlock holes were seen near the top of the cupboard, neither of these had penetrated through the entire wall. The floor joists of the room rested an offset along the north wall. The slightly irregular surface of the offset as well the rough vertical surface of the ashlar blocks immediately above it suggests that the offset had been created by removing part of the string course moulding which extended around the exterior walls of the tower.

3 PLATES

Plate 1: Exposed Joists in Northwest part of Room 32

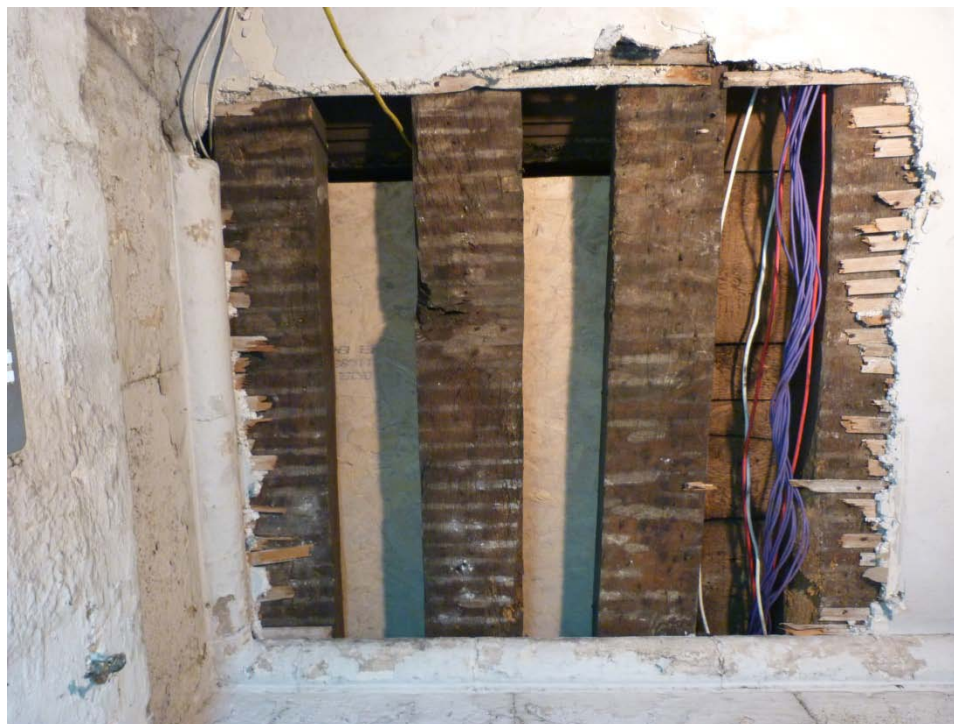


Plate 2: Exposed Joists in Northwest part of Room 38



Plate 3: Fireplace in West Wall of Room 38



Plate 4: Door in North Wall of Room 37/38



4 REFERENCES

Scott, G. G. 1863 *Gleanings from Westminster Abbey*. Oxford and London: John Henry and James Parker

Tatton-Brown, T. 1995 'Westminster Abbey: Archaeological Recording at the West End of the Church' in *The Antiquaries Journal*, Volume 75, 171-88. London

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

5.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited wish to thank the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey for funding this work, and Katie Innes of Malcolm Reading Consultants for commissioning it.

5.2 We also thank Professor Warwick Rodwell for his continued advice and help.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Site Code	Context No.	Room	Type	Description	Date
JCR12	1	32	Timber	Floor joist	16th century
JCR12	2	32	Timber	Floor joist	16th century
JCR12	3	32	Timber	Floor joist	16th century

APPENDIX 2: OASIS REPORT FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-135404

Project details

Project name	Jerusalem Chamber and Jericho Parlour, Westminster Abbey
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the installation of a dumb waiter in the Jericho Parlour and its undercroft. The project entailed the recording of three 16th century timber floor joist that were partially removed in order to accommodate the new dumb waiter. Observations were also made of the nature of the walls and general layout of the undercroft complex. The complex comprises a corridor of 14th century construction with most of the additional rooms being added by the construction of the Jericho Parlour in the 16th century, although the configuration of the complex continued to change throughout the centuries following..
Project dates	Start: 27-04-2012 End: 18-05-2012
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	JCR12 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	World Heritage Site
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	WALLS Medieval
Monument type	WALLS Post Medieval
Monument type	TIMBER FLOOR Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Listed Building Consent

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER WESTMINSTER Jerusalem Chamber and Jericho Parlour, Westminster Abbey
Postcode	SW1P 3PA
Site coordinates	TQ 3000 7946 51 0 51 29 55 N 000 07 37 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Professor Warwick Rodwell, OBE
Project design originator	Chris Mayo
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	Paw Jorgensen
Type of sponsor/funding body	Consultant
Name of sponsor/funding body	Malcolm Reading Consultants

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Westminster Abbey Museum
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Images vector", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient Westminster Abbey Museum
Paper Media available "Drawing", "Plan", "Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title Summary Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief Carried out during the Preparatory Work for the Installation of a New Dumbwaiter in the Jericho Parlour and its Undercroft, Westminster Abbey
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