

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING REPORT**

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**SCCAS REPORT No. 2011/014**

# **St. Mary's Church, Harkstead HRK 041**



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## HER Information

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**Planning Application No:** N/A (DAC Archaeological Faculty Condition)

**Date of Fieldwork:** 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011

**Grid Reference:** TM 1942 3528

**Funding Body:** Local Parochial Church Council (through Cubitt Theobald Ltd)

**Curatorial Officer:** Bob Carr (DAC Archaeological Advisor)

**Project Officer:** Stuart Boulter

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## Summary

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*Harkstead*, St. Mary's Church (TM 1942 3528; HRK 041) a programme of work at the church included provision of a new floor in the south aisle. In order to facilitate this, the existing floor was removed and the underlying soil reduced down to the new formation level. As it is likely that there would have been burials within the interior of the church, and possibly earlier graves excavated when the area of the 14<sup>th</sup> century south aisle was actually outside the building, then it is likely that the removed material effectively comprised the upper fill of graves.

At the eastern end of the south aisle two ledger stones were revealed bedded directly on the earth with no evidence for underlying formal tombs. One of the stones, that commemorating Richard Tyler junior who died in 1696, was already broken, but its component parts were laid in their correct positions. The second, which commemorated another Richard Tyler who died in 1674, presumably the father or another close relative of Richard Tyler junior, was intact. Both stones comprised a hard, very dark grey limestone.

(Stuart Boulter for Suffolk County Council and Cubitt Theobald Ltd)





# 1. Introduction

Faculty Consent for a programme of works at the church of St. Mary, Harkstead (TM 1942 3528) (Fig. 1) was conditional on archaeological mitigation work being implemented if features of archaeological interest were exposed.

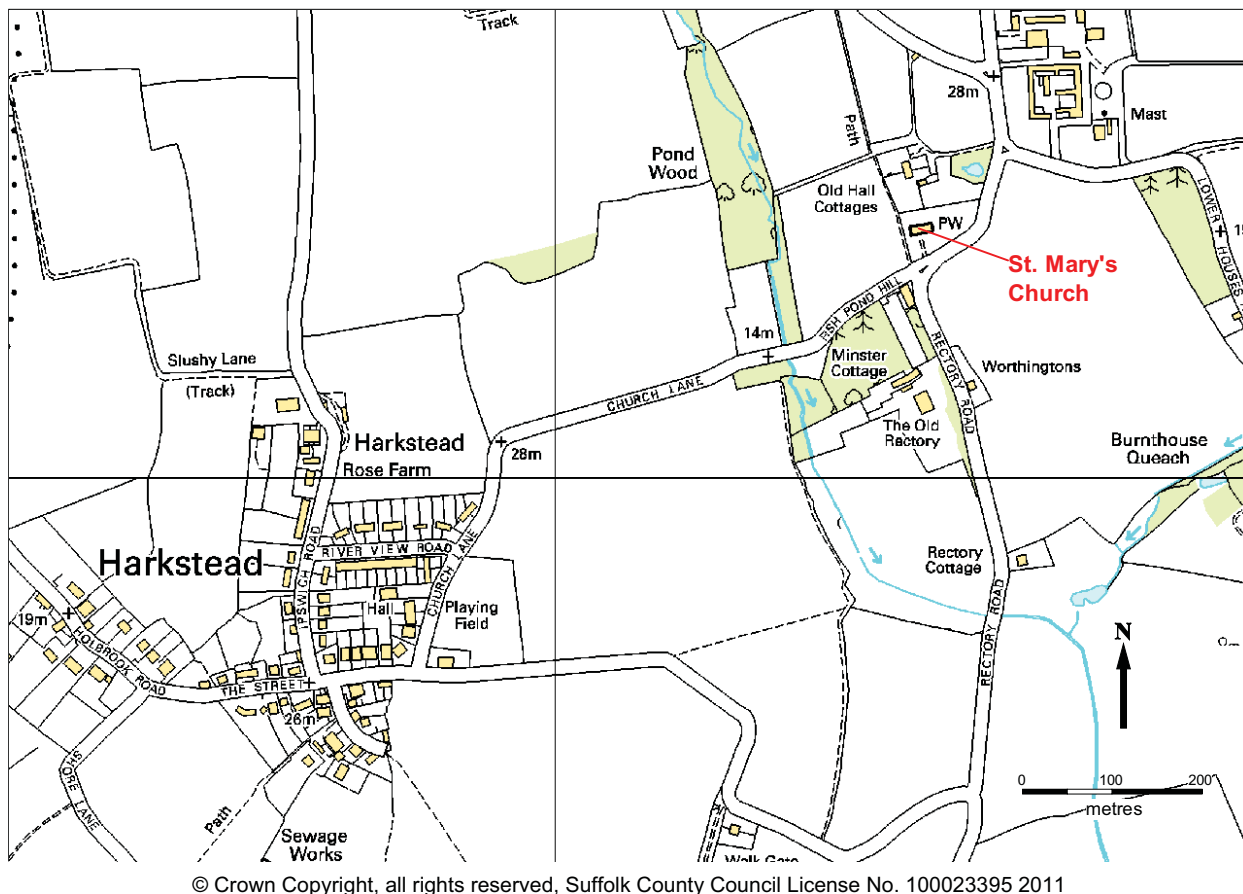


Figure 1. Site location

Subsequently, after the exposure of two ledger stones in the eastern end of the south aisle, Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team were commissioned, by Cubitt Theobold Ltd on behalf of their client, the Local Parochial Church Council, to undertake the required archaeological recording work.

# 2. Methodology

Two site visits were made: the first on the Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011, when Ledger Stone 1 was exposed, and the second on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, when Ledger Stone 2 was fully revealed from beneath the joists of the existing organ platform.

In each instance, a photographic record was made, the inscription on the stones was transcribed and notes were made on the dimensions and character of each stone.

### 3. Results

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Figure 2 shows the location of the Ledger Stones 1 and 2 within the south aisle of the church.

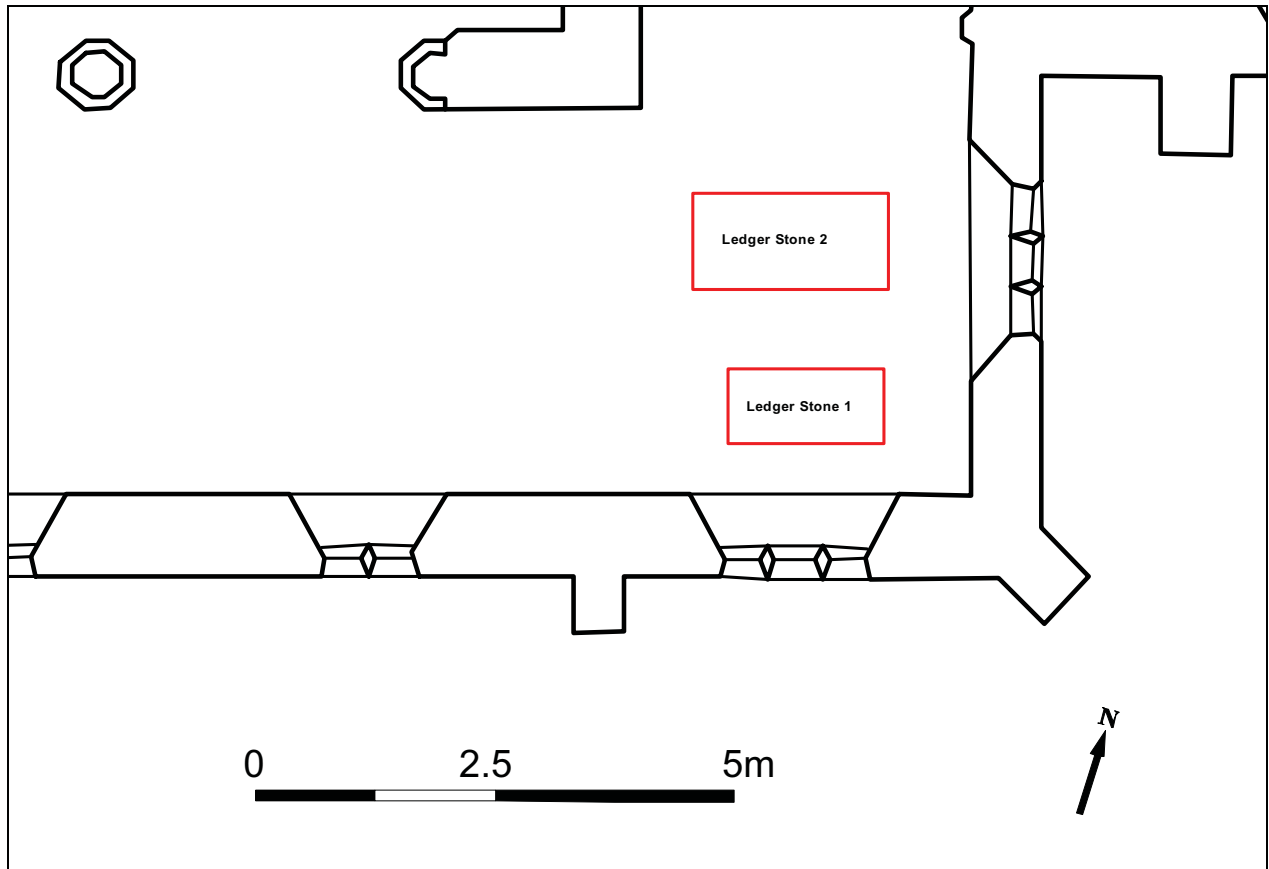


Figure 2. Location of ledger stones

By the time of the first site visit, the contractors had removed the floor in the south aisle and reduced the majority of the surface down to the formation level for the new floor. The one exception was the eastern end of the south aisle where a ledger stone had been uncovered (Fig. 2, Ledger Stone 1) and the joists for the organ platform were still *in situ* covering a second ledger stone (Fig. 2, Ledger Stone 2). Ledger Stone 1 was recorded during the first site visit, while Ledger Stone 2 was recorded during the second visit after the contractors had removed the overlying wooden joists.

## Ledger Stone 1:



Plate 1 Ledger Stone 1

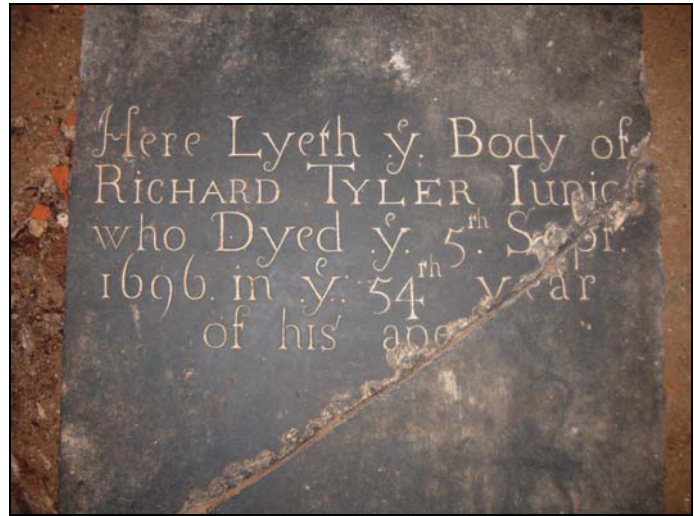


Plate 2 Ledger Stone 1, detail of inscription

Here Lyeth .y<sup>e</sup>. [the] Body of  
Richard Tyler Junior  
who Dyed .y<sup>e</sup>. 5<sup>th</sup> Sept.  
1696 in .y<sup>e</sup>. 54<sup>th</sup> year  
of his age

Ledger Stone 1 was revealed beneath the existing floor by the contractors at a level approximately 3 – 4cm below that of Ledger Stone 2 to the north. The stone was rectangular, measuring 1.65m by 0.81m with a thickness of approximately 7cm. The stone itself comprised a hard, dark grey coloured limestone.

The surface of the stone was in good condition, as was the inscription incised towards its top end. However, it had already been broken into four pieces when found, with a series of chips along the adjoining pieces suggesting that it had been struck repeatedly by a sharp heavy object. This alone suggests that the stone was not in its original location, although the four pieces had been arranged in their correct position in relationship to each other, with the inscription readable from the eastern, chancel end, of the church.

The inscription on the stone commemorated a single person, a Richard Tyler junior who died on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1696 at the age of 54. While not unusual in itself, stones of this type often have other members of the family added at a later date.

The stone was lifted by the contractors to reveal a continuation of the brown sandy earth encountered throughout the south aisle. There was no evidence for an underlying brick-built grave or supporting structure, although fragments of decayed wood were seen directly beneath the stone.

After recording, the intention was to re-bury the stone in the same position but at a slightly lower level with a membrane on its surface to ensure that it survives intact.

## Ledger Stone 2



Plate 3 Ledger Stone 2

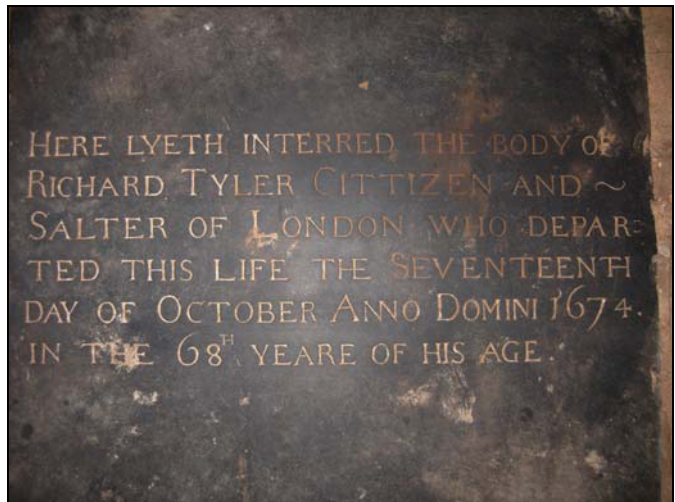


Plate 4 Ledger Stone 2, detail of inscription

Here lyeth interred the body of  
Richard Tyler Cittizen and  
Salter of London who depar:  
ted this life the seventeenth  
day of October Anno Domini 1674.  
in the 68<sup>th</sup> yeare of his age.

Ledger Stone 2 was revealed below the existing organ platform and was clearly already known about as it appears on the architect's plan of January 2008 (0718/03D). This suggests that it was set in the south aisle floor prior to its removal as part of this scheme of works. The top of Ledger Stone 2 was 3 – 4cm above Ledger Stone 1. The stone was rectangular and intact, measuring 2.01m by 1.01m with a thickness of approximately 15cm.

The surface of the stone was in good condition, as was the incised inscription which, similarly to Ledger Stone 1, suggests that it had been protected from the passage of feet for most of the time since its introduction to the church.

Similarly to Ledger Stone 1, only one person was commemorated on a stone where there was plenty of room to add other family members. The commemorated person in this instance was another Richard Tyler who died on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1674 at the age of 68. It seems reasonable to assume that the two Richard Tylers are related and, given the dates, were probably father and son. As in Ledger Stone 1, the inscription faced the eastern end of the south aisle.

The stone was lifted by the contractors to reveal a continuation of the brown sandy earth encountered throughout the south aisle. There was no evidence for an underlying brick-built grave or supporting structure for the stone. While this does not entirely preclude the fact that the stone was in its original position, it does seem unlikely.

## **4. Conclusions**

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The two ledger stones revealed during the recent site works were expensive objects in their day and suggest that the Tyler family were of some import in the community, either as local residents with business associations elsewhere, or outsiders with local business interests.

It remains unclear whether the stones were found close to their original positions, although by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century it is likely that burials of this status within the church would have been associated with brick-built graves. In addition, ledger stones of this size and weight were not usually lain directly onto earth with at least some supporting structure placed underneath.

Given that the people commemorated on the ledger stones are probably father and son, it is also of interest that only one member of the family is commemorated on each stone. Brick-built graves were effectively shafts which could accommodate multiple burials and it was common for subsequent deaths within the family to be added to the original inscription.

The remit of this project was effectively to record anything of archaeological interest revealed during the programme of works and the budget did not allow for in depth research. However, the information in this report is now available for use by anybody wanting to investigate further. For example, one possible area of study would be to

explore the journals of David Elisha Davy (available at Suffolk Record Office) whose early 19<sup>th</sup> century church excursions are recorded in some detail and may reveal the original location of the ledger stones.

## **5. List of contributors and acknowledgements**

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The project was both managed and undertaken by Stuart Boulter (SCCAS Field Team).

Thanks are extended to Cubitt Theobald Ltd for keeping the archaeologists aware of progress on the site.

In addition, thanks are given to Abby Antrobus (SCCAS Conservation Team) for acting as liaison between the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (Bob Carr) and the SCCAS Field Team.