

March 31, 2023

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**Re: Faculty Ref# 2018-020103**

Dear Esteemed PCC and Churchwardens,

As the Managing Trustee of the Shakespeare Southampton Legacy Trust (SSLT), it is my pleasure to provide a written summary of Phase I and Phase II findings of the Southampton Monument & Vault Initiative (SMVI) on behalf of Lord Montagu to supplement his in-person briefing to the PCC on 14th March 2023.

**BACKGROUND** Questions related to suspected water ingress and the structural stability of the Southampton Monument led to a need to examine the subterranean Wriothesley Southampton Sepulchre. On 2nd July 2018, a petition for Faculty was submitted and later approved to re-establish permanent access to substantiate the condition of the sub-structures, monitor these over time, and carry out any subsequent repair work and conservation measures. The petition was supported by extensive historical, architectural, legal and conservation research material from leading experts in the relevant fields setting out the need for investigation. In its fulfilment, SMVI was planned to a series of manageable phases aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To ensure the long-term stability of the Southampton Chapel, floor and monuments;
- To investigate the condition of the Wriothesley Southampton Sepulchre and its contents;
- To ensure respectful treatment and care of the Wriothesley family remains;
- To record the Burial Chamber and its contents as they are of particular academic, historical, and archaeological interest and importance;
- Once the condition is known, sensitive conservation measures and monitoring may be proposed to the fabric and contents;
- To provide sensitive and considered information on the above for educational purposes to a broader public audience.

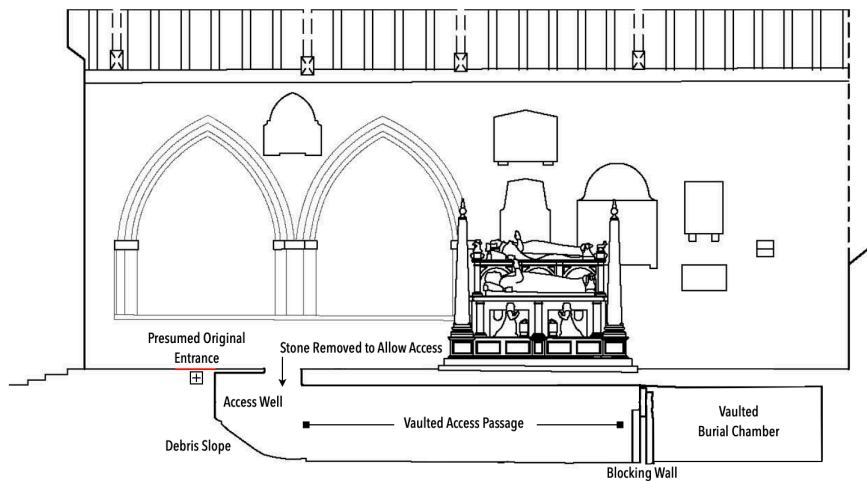
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## SUMMARY OF PHASE I FINDINGS

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Access to the Wriothesley Southampton Sepulchre was re-established without complication on Tuesday, 31st August 2021. It was confirmed to enclose four distinct subsurface architectural features:

1. Access Well/Shaft (1.62m x 1.43m)
2. Access Passage (6.05m x 1.43m x 1.40m)
3. A partially exposed (non-structural) Burial Chamber Blocking Wall
4. Burial Chamber (3.09m x 3.11m) with a floor to underside of crown height of 1.40m



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Inspecting Architect Louise Bainbridge and Structural Engineer Richard Swift surveyed the mortuary complex finding it in good condition with no structural concerns.

The Burial Chamber Blocking Wall was discovered breached, with its upper courses dislodged and dispersed on the Access Passage floor exposing the Burial Chamber. Undated graffiti was observed on the blocking wall and dislodged bricks. Evidence of damp ingress on the side walls throughout the mortuary complex suggests a historically fluctuating external groundwater table.

The investigations also confirmed that the Southampton Monument (c. 1594) is supported by the vaulted Access Passage below floor level, running its entire north length, and the monument appears to have settled towards the south on the make-up fill south of the Access Passage. A precise level survey is to be undertaken every five years in conjunction with the quinquennial survey now that a datum has been established. To clarify, the Burial Chamber is not underneath the Southampton Monument.

Archaeologist Adrian Miles investigated and concluded that the Wriothesley Southampton Sepulchre does not have an exterior entrance from the churchyard. The location of the purported external entrance was confirmed to be a brick-lined grave but was not excavated to depth to confirm burial or extent due to the conditions of the Faculty prohibiting the disturbance of human remains.

Upon completion of the Phase I assessments, the esteemed Advisory Panel confirmed that the Sepulchre and the sixteen funerary lead containers within its Burial Chamber, dating to the Tudor, Jacobean and Stuart periods, are, from a cultural, archaeological, academic and funerary trade perspective, of considerable historical value, warranting a conservation strategy equal to their significance. They also confirmed evidence of intermittent groundwater ingress, deteriorating storage methods, and post-interment interference, meriting remedial conservation measures of varying urgency.

**To summarise, the pressing issues arising from the Phase I Heritage Conservation Assessments were:**

- Evidence of intermittent high groundwater levels throughout the mortuary complex;
- Evidence of a breached blocking wall to the Burial Chamber;
- Evidence of graffiti;
- Evidence of modern brickwork interventions (the 1950s) with cement-based mortar scarring the original Tudor works;
- Evidence of collapsed burial containers stacked in an unsustainable and cluttered manner that does not reflect the care and decency expected for the treatment of the dead;
- Evidence of post-interment damage to the coffins;
- Discrepancies between the visible evidence within the Burial Chamber and the Titchfield Burial Registers.

Phase II of SMVI was conceived in direct response to issues identified in Phase I and was carried out with the expressed written consent of His Honour Philip Waller CBE, Chancellor. It was supervised by some of the UK's foremost environmental, funerary, heritage, exhumation and archaeological specialists.

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## Summary of Phase II Findings

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1. Renowned Tudor brick expert Dr Gerard Lynch inspected the historic brickwork and confirmed that *the structural alterations in 1951 were built using a mix of reclaimed bricks and had been laid by an unskilled operative using wholly inappropriate modern Ordinary Portland Cement-based mortar that is far too strong and wholly incompatible with the traditional built Tudor brickwork*. Unfortunately, the onsite advisory could not extrapolate the position and extent of the original Tudor construction at the westernmost end of the Access Shaft due to the extensive alterations in 1951. A period-appropriate reconstruction is under advisement and, if approved, will be actioned in the final phase of the Southampton Monument & Vault Initiative (2023-24).
2. The Morton Partnership provided specialist structural and engineering advice on available options for improving secure access to the Chapel subsurface and restoring the historic position of the Access Shaft. Stuart Armitage found the brickwork of the Burial Chamber *in generally good order but observed notable horizontal cracks approximately at the springing line to each side of the Access Passage, which returned at the east end against the crypt walls*. During the investigation, lime mortar tell-tales were applied at 8No. positions, 6No. of these being in the access tunnel and two being on the east end returns. *These can be monitored to determine any progressive nature of the cracking and the results assessed*.
3. TCS Exhumation Services reordered the burial containers to relieve any pressure caused by stacking and previous manoeuvres, especially those unstable or whose stacks had collapsed. The coffins were moved to more suitable and sustainable positions with the utmost regard for the sanctity of Christian burial. Any resulting strategy for reorganisation, if approved, will be actioned in the final phase of the Southampton Monument & Vault Initiative (2023-24).
4. In response to Phase I findings related to water ingress, Inspecting Architect Louise Bainbridge recommended enlisting the services of Tobit Curties to (1) undertake a study of the environmental conditions of the Sepulchre and Chapel; (2) evaluate evidence of water ingress throughout the mortuary complex; and (3) propose remedial measures. The resulting Building Environmental Performance Assessment (BEPA), sponsored in part by a grant from the Church Building Council, will be instrumental in determining a holistic approach to conserving the Southampton Chapel, its remarkable monuments, and its subsurface Sepulchre, inclusive of its contents.

### **To summarise, the pressing issues arising from the Phase II assessments are:**

- The walls and floor of the crypt were found to contain extremely high levels of moisture. This is due to the below-ground water, both due to the failing rainwater disposal system and to the standing water level, which settles on top of the clay strata on which the vault is constructed. This water then evaporates into the air mass, causing it to rise to 100% Relative Humidity (RH).
- The internal dew point temperature (DPT) in the crypt was 12.3°C, indicating that the surfaces were in a state of condensation. Saturated air from the vault is seeping into the coffins via splits, punctures and corrosion holes in the lead. Because air exchange to the vault is so limited, the opportunity for evaporation will be minimal.
- Condensation was confirmed between coffin layers, with corrosion, staining, subsidence, punctures, saturation and crushing all evident within the crypt to varying degrees. High RH of this type and wetting from floods will inevitably cause the deterioration of organic materials such as timber cases for coffins. This was also observed.
- Tobit Curteis concluded that, *if the human remains are to remain in the Burial Chamber, then minimising water in the coffins is an important step*. He also prescribed a support structure for the coffins *“to allow them to remain above anticipated flood levels*. These remedial measures are currently under advisement.

- Eight of the sixteen funerary items in the crypt display affixed depositum plates, presumably identifying the occupant. The remaining eight are void of identification though four disassociated depositum plates survive and may be concatenated. The Titchfield Burial Register records a further five Wriothesley family members currently unaccounted for in the Sepulchre. Lord Montagu considers it his duty to reconcile the Titchfield Burial Register with the physical evidence in the vault; apart from being his ancestors, they are also of particular academic, historical and cultural interest. Various strategies are presently under advisement to advance identification and, if enacted, would result in a valuable historical record of this important class of archaeological site in Britain.

The final restoration and commemoration phase of SMVI, when approved and actioned, will (1) restore secured access and the historic position of the Access Shaft, (2) safeguard the contents of the Burial Chamber from environmental conditions and deteriorating depository methods, (3) respectfully identify and commemorate the interred on a memorial sealing stone and (4) restore the Southampton (c.1594) and Lady Mary Wriothesley (1615) monuments. Dr David Carrington, from the Skillington Workshop, is completing his conservation report and will supervise the sympathetic restoration of both monuments in 2023, sponsored by the Shakespeare Southampton Legacy Trust.

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## ACHIEVEMENTS

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Phase I and II of SMVI was supervised by some of the UK's foremost environmental, funerary, heritage, exhumation and archaeological specialists and resulted in an expanded *Parent Report to the Project SMVI* which, Dr Julian Litten has characterized as *worthy of publication by the 'Council for British Archaeology*.

Some of the lead objects in the Sepulchre are considered rare survivals from a funerary trade and cultural perspective, warranting a museum-quality 3D Photogrammetry Recording. ThinkSee3D, an industry leader in photogrammetry, completed state-of-the-art, interactive 3D heritage recordings, fulfilling, in part, SSLT's charitable commitment to provide considered information for educational purposes when appropriate.

SUMO Geophysics Ltd established a baseline heritage recording of the Church, Churchyard, Southampton Chapel and subsurface Sepulchre, conducting (1) a Laser Scan Survey and (2) a 3D Photogrammetry recording which resulted in an exacting geo-referenced dataset and a state-of-the-art Interactive 3D Photogrammetry Models.

Finally, re-establishing access to the Wriothesley Southampton Sepulchre has instituted the first comprehensive conservation plan in four centuries, safeguarding the nexus from further deterioration caused by environmental and structural factors impacting the once inaccessible subsurface fabric. Re-establishing access was also the first step in addressing Lord Montagu's now justified concerns regarding the environmental and storage conditions within Sepulchre of his ancestors. He remains steadfast in his stewardship of the Southampton Legacies safeguarded in St Peter and is committed to collaborating with the PCC to maintain the fabric under their remit whilst pursuing sensitive conservation measures to protect the interred under his. To date, over £90,000 has been gifted to support SSLT's heritage conservation efforts at Titchfield.

I hope this abbreviated update inspires confidence as SSLT prepares to propose and sponsor the final restoration and commemoration phase of SMVI in service to the ancient Parish Church of St Peter and in partnership with PCC at the heart of its Christian mission.

Kind regards,

Laura Matthias

SMVI Project Coordinator

On behalf of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and the SSLT Trustees

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## APPRAISALS/ENDORSEMENTS

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*I cannot overstate the project's significance. The vault has extraordinary historical value, both as the final resting place of the Earls of Southampton, whose legacy the SSLT has worked tirelessly to preserve and disseminate and as a rare window into a range of Early Modern burial practices. The discoveries made during the initial surveys speak to the unique character of the space and its contents that undoubtedly demand the level of care and maintenance that the SSLT seek to provide.*

*Despite the vast amount of historic interest represented inside the vault, it is clear that the project is sensitive to the ethical and religious concerns and is contemplating these concerns alongside the duty to investigate and maintain both the fabric and contents of the Wriothesley Southampton Sepulchre. Hereto I recognise and acknowledge: (1) the expertise of the SMVI Advisory Panel, (2) the jurisdiction of the PCC, as it relates to fabric, and (3) Lord Montagu's rights as senior hereditary descendant of the interred and as current custodian of the contents of the Burial Chamber.*

*I endorse the SSLT's proposals to re-organise and develop storage solutions for the remains since, as they stand, the containers are stacked in an unsustainable and cluttered manner that does not reflect the care and decency expected for the treatment of the dead. Through careful and considered planning, I believe that we can develop an arrangement that protects the containers' condition in a manner that maintains the occupant's peace and dignity in their chosen final resting place.*

**John F. Harris MA, Senior Partner, T. Cribb & Sons, TCS Exhumations**

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*Dear Laura,*

*Congratulations to you and everyone who has contributed towards this significant achievement, which is testimony to the landmark work carried out by the SMVI team, under your excellent watch as project leader. At every stage there has been sensitivity to the parish, respect for those interred in the vault and a proper appreciation of the spiritual dimension of the project. It is wonderful and wholly fitting that this historic undertaking has been recognised and affirmed by the National Church.*

*St. Peter's Titchfield has been incredibly blessed in the level of expertise contributed by the SMVI, which would have been beyond our wildest dreams when the PCC identified "working with our heritage" as a missional opportunity. Going forward, it will be a great benefit for the PCC to have a thorough knowledge of the sub-surface of the Southampton Chapel, how it has been affected by water ingress and how the monument is supported.*

*I thank God for our esteemed team of experts, for the generosity of Lord Montagu, the Caroline Montagu Weston Fund and other sponsors, for the opportunity to have been personally involved from the beginning and for the churchwardens' generous invitation to return after retirement, as access to the vault was re-established and further investigations began. It has been absolutely fascinating and hugely rewarding. May God continue to bless and prosper you, St. Peter's PCC and the whole team as you progress to the next stage.*

*Warm regards,*

**Retired Reverend Susan Allman**

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*79. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Lord Montagu and the SMVI team for their commitment and energy in pursuing this remarkable and unique project and for presenting such a formidable body of research in support of the conservation programme. I look forward to learning the outcome of the current investigations in due course.<sup>1</sup>*

**His Honour Philip Waller CBE**

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<sup>1</sup> Judgment of His Honour Judge Philip Waller, Chancellor: *In re St. Peter Titchfield: The Wriothesley Southampton Monument and Vault* [2021] ECC Por 2 at [72], (Consistory Court of the Diocese of Portsmouth).