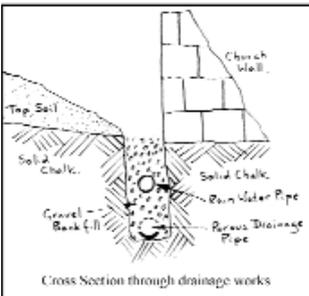


The Saga of the Damp 1995 -2009



At the start of the Millennium Appeal it was realised that the damp problem on the west and south-west walls of the church had to be one of the priorities for funds as there was beginning to be serious damage to the internal stone work of the reredos and also to the plaster behind the pulpit. It was thought that this was due entirely to rising damp. The first work of the Appeal was to replace the Victorian open brick gully round the west and south walls of the chancel and vestry by a porous land drain sunk deep into the chalk on which the walls are founded. The improvement in the damp to the walls of the chancel was immediate; but the masonry took a considerable time to dry out. The wall behind the pulpit improved, but only very slightly - this was thought to be because of the very considerable thickness of the wall.

The damaged masonry of the reredos was repaired using carefully coloured artificial stone mortar. The repairs were deliberately left slightly less than perfect so that they would not stand out too much against the rest of the stonework (new stone was also rejected for this reason and also for cost considerations). At the same time all the emulsion paint, which incredibly had been applied to all the masonry of the reredos, including the delicate carving, during the 50s, was painstakingly removed. The paint had been a major cause in making the damage so severe as it trapped the damp within the stone.



In time it was realised that the wall to the rear of the pulpit was not improving significantly and consideration was given as to whether there was a totally different cause.

Almost by chance it was observed, during a particularly heavy rain storm, that the gutters were totally inadequate - one 4" downpipe served the whole of the south wall of the church and the overflow cascaded down outside of the wall behind the pulpit.

The solution was to redirect the gutter on the south side of the nave to the down pipe on the side of the baptistry so that the areas of roof for each down pipe were more even. The improvement achieved by this was dramatic; but after a considerable time had been allowed for the wall to dry out it was realised that there was still a problem. During a routine clearing of the gutters it was spotted that for totally incomprehensible reasons the end of the new gutter had been recessed into the wall so that in periods of storm any gutter overload would be directed straight into the wall!! This was easily remedied and the wall started to dry out properly

During the Quinquennial Architectural Inspection of the church it was stated that the exterior of the church needed re-pointing in several places including the area adjacent to where the damp had been. During this inspection it was spotted that there were 2 old stumps of trees (probably ash) about 4" in diameter in the surface of the wall - at last it became obvious why the drain overflows had penetrated the wall so readily. These stumps have been removed and the necessary re-pointing with lime-mortar completed. Unfortunately the pieces of timber were not saved so it has not been possible to date or type them. But it is highly probable that they were from the period in the 18th C when the church was reported to be in a poor state.



During the time when the wall was suffering severely from damp the tile-quoins that had been used on the corner of the wall had softened and crumbled - it was decided to cut the damaged tiles out and replace them.

The Church is greatly indebted to Bill Chacksfield who has very generously funded these final stages of the work in memory of his son Tristan.