



## *THE CHRISTCHURCH ANTIQUARIANS*

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### ***Newsletter, Spring 2019***

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#### ***A WORD FROM THE (NEW) EDITOR***

**Lauren Pearce**

Welcome to the first 2019 issue of our occasional newsletter!

With longstanding editor, Roger Donne, stepping down, I've agreed to take his baton to run the next leg of keeping you all informed of the news, reviews, events and stories of The Christchurch Antiquarians. In this 1st issue of 2019, both David Eels and Roger have revisited previous articles with new information, both relating to the Priory. I discuss a summary of a chapter from my dissertation pertaining to Christchurch Castle, while Roger

provides an update on the conditions of the Highcliffe Castle walls. Finally, Mike provides an update of the work at Millhams.

New material and authors are always welcome so if you have an idea for an article in future issues please let me know.

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## ***SO, WHO'S THE NEWBIE, THEN?***

### **Laureen Pearce**

I joined the Christchurch Antiquarians in 2014, as part of my quest to build my work experience for my studies. This summer I finally graduated with a degree in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, having spent the last 6 years studying part-time, via distance learning, through the University of Leicester. I initially volunteered on the Druce Farm Roman villa project with the East Dorset Antiquarian Society, but my work schedule didn't always allow me to attend the digs during the week. So I was introduced to TCA and have since volunteered regularly on the Millhams project.



My husband and I immigrated to the UK from South Africa in 2005 and naturalised in 2011. We've lived in Christchurch ever since (apart from two years in Lymington). For me the depth of archaeological and historical heritage in the UK, and in particular Christchurch, is amazing, inspiring me to study it (although my husband blames Time Team for that!). I love anything Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval, and especially love that Christchurch has elements of all these periods.

On a personal level, I love horses, scuba diving, reading and digging up the past (archaeologically of course!). Oh, and writing about it too.

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## **THE REDVERS TOMBSTONE IN THE PRIORY - REVISITED**

### **David Eels**

*This is an extended and updated version of an article I wrote fifteen years ago for this newsletter.*

In the 1090s Richard de Redvers was a minor baron in Normandy and a close friend of the future Henry I. The family name was taken from the settlement of Reviere in Normandy, situated about three miles from the coast, which was close enough in June 1944 to be liberated by the Canadians on D-Day itself. After Prince Henry became king in August 1100 he rewarded Richard for his loyalty by giving him numerous estates in southern England, including Christchurch, Lymington, and the Isle of Wight. The family (earls of Devon from 1141) were thus lords of Christchurch until 1293, and also patrons of Christchurch Priory, so it's not surprising that some of them were buried there. I have found evidence to show that at least six members of the family were buried in Christchurch Priory and from other documents it seems quite likely that some other members were also buried there.

One of these tombstones is still in the Priory Church and I believe that it is the only extant tombstone in England of any member of the family. It is the tombstone of the third Baldwin out of five Baldwins who appear in the Redvers pedigree. He was the only son of the aged William de Redvers, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Devon, and he predeceased his father by a year. By January 1200 Earl William had two daughters only, both of whom were still under ten years of age, and at the behest of King John they were betrothed to royal favourites. A royal charter dated April 28<sup>th</sup> of that year confirms Joan's betrothal to Hubert de Burgh and lists some of the lands that Hubert will hold after the Earl's death unless a son is born to Earl William's wife. Baldwin, therefore, was born after 28<sup>th</sup> April 1200 and as he died on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1216 it is impossible for him to have been any more than sixteen years of age. He had been married to Margaret, the daughter and heir of Warin FitzGerold who was King John's chamberlain and whose name appears in the introduction to Magna Carta. Margaret was old enough to have lived with her husband for she bore him a son who was to become the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Devon. Because of the father's young age, it seems quite likely that the child was born posthumously, but it is not recorded when he came

of age and did homage for his lands; all we know is that he was knighted by the king and created Earl of Devon on Christmas Day 1239.



**Photo 1:** Baldwin III's tombstone in front of high altar in the Quire, with the carpet removed in 1994

The tombstone of *Baldwin III* is under the carpet in front of the high altar in the Quire. Visitors had the opportunity to view it in 1994 when the carpet was removed (Photo 1). It is set into the top step by the altar rail with its worn Latin inscription on the riser. Spread over two lines it reads:

*BALDEWIN FILI WILLI*

*COMITIS DEVONIE*

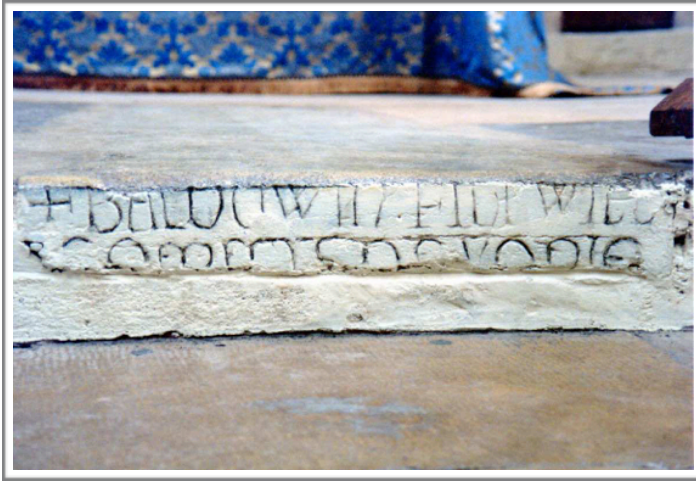
which translates as:

*BALDWIN SON OF WILLIAM*

*EARL OF DEVON*

In 1994 I noticed that the stone had a diagonal crack across it, which probably occurred when the tombstone was moved during the 15<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding of the Quire and the alterations to its crypt.

It should be noted that I do not count the magnificent tomb in Westminster Abbey of Baldwin's great-granddaughter, Aveline, as a de Redvers tomb



**Photo 2:** *The inscription as it appeared in 1994*

because she never bore the family name; she was born a de Fors (or de Fortibus as the name is written in medieval Latin documents and in most local books) and died a Plantagenet, as in 1269, at the age of ten, she was married to King Henry III's second son, Edmund, Earl of Lancaster. Unfortunately, like her great-grandfather, she died young, but childless, just a few weeks before her sixteenth birthday. Her husband was the founder of the royal house of Lancaster with three of his descendants becoming kings of England in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

*Editor's note: I am grateful to the Vicar of Christchurch, the Reverend Canon Charles Stewart, for permitting me to use David's photographs of Baldwin III's tomb taken in 1994.*

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## ***AN UPDATE ON THE PRIORY WALLS AT CHRISTCHURCH***

### **Roger Donne**

In our November 2010 Newsletter, I reported on a task TCA undertook to remove vegetation growing on and around the remains of the Priory walls on the Mill Stream, at the eastern end of the Priory Church. Our chairman Mike Tizzard had noted how overgrown these listed structures had become and enquired from the Priory Church authorities where the responsibility for their maintenance lay. It appeared that Christchurch Borough Council

had responsibility but not the resources to deal with the maintenance of these historic remains. So, Mike sought the permissions of both Church and Council authorities to set about the task of clearing vegetation, primarily ivy, from the walls, which we feared was damaging these ancient remains and



**Photo 1:** *Clearing the Priory Walls in 2010*

preventing visitors from properly appreciating them.

We were provided with a method of working by which we cut off vegetation without attempting to dig out deeply seated roots, and a bat expert assured us that there were no bats roosting in the walls. Our first work party took place on the weekend of 25/26th September 2010, and we produced upwards of 30 bags of material for composting (Photo 1). As we worked, we did note how the mortar holding the ancient stones together had decayed and been loosened by the ivy roots and we feared that without a proper plan of conservation, perhaps involving capping the walls with a conservation-approved mortar, severe damage to the stonework would result.

Now it appears that the Council authorities have woken up to their responsibilities to the walls and in August 2018 members of Christchurch council's planning committee approved a £60,000 project to rebuild several sections around the scheduled monument, admitting (according to a report in the Daily Echo) that "a lack of maintenance" was responsible for their





**Photo 2:** *The open aspect after the vegetation was cleared*

poor state. However overall it would appear that an even larger sum would be required fully to repair and conserve all of the surrounding boundary walls, with some estimates reportedly reaching £225,000 in total.

Whether such spending commitments will survive the amalgamation of our borough in 2019 with Bournemouth and Poole remains to be seen. However it is refreshing to see that a start has been made in clearing vegetation from the banks of the Mill Stream at the eastern end of the



**Photo 3:** *The walls clearly still remain in a precarious state*

Priory. Some may have been startled by the openness of the aspect now revealed (Photo 2); certainly it presents a greatly different prospect to the shrubby banks we encountered in 2010. My feeling is that the clearance gives proper prominence to the ancient walls which remain, and with sympathetic low-level planting and interpretation boards the visitor experience will be enhanced. However, much still remains to be done. The specialist stabilisation work on the walls is not yet complete (or even started) and the walls remain in a precarious state (Photo 3).

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## ***THE STONES OF CHRISTCHURCH CASTLE***

**Laureen Pearce**

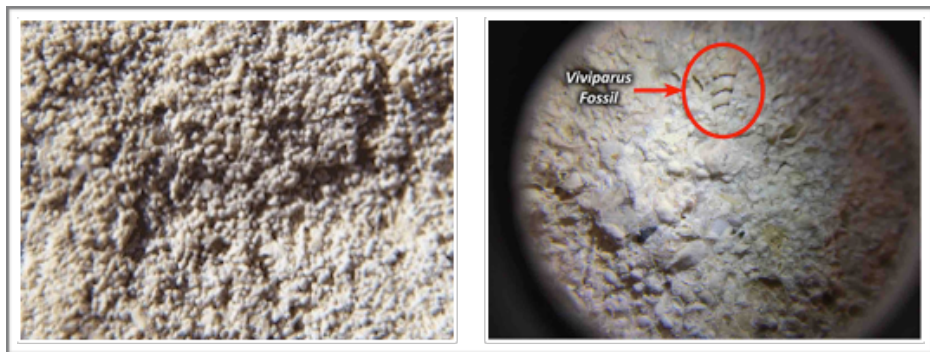
The culmination of my six years of study was my dissertation, which I wrote on Christchurch Castle. I first of all want to express my deepest gratitude to TCA chairman, Mike Tizzard, and TCA member, David Eels, for their valuable input towards my research on the castle.

In one of the chapters of my dissertation, I investigated some of the stones of the Keep and the Constable's Hall and came to some interesting conclusions. My inspiration for this part of my discussion came from a friend of mine, Andrew Webster, who is a stonemason by day (as his main job) and an amateur fossil-hunter and geologist by night (that is, in his spare time). I was showing him around the ruins and was very impressed with how easily he was able to point out which stone came from which geological bed and even which quarry. So I started investigating this further.

The existing scholarship on the castle generally states the following types of stone were used in its construction: 'Freshwater' stone, ironstone, sandstone, Purbeck marble, the red stone full of broken shells (red Barton Bed G stone), with Binstead, Bonchurch and 'Freshwater' stone for the ashlar finishing. A few non-academic sources added Portland and Ham Hill limestones to the mix. While most of these stone types were confirmed by Mr Webster, adding Burr from the Purbeck beds, possible Quarr Stone from the Isle of Wight; and a stone from the Unio Bed of the Upper Purbeck Limestone Group at Peveril Point, Swanage, he was adamant that he could not see any Portland Stone present in either the keep or the hall and that the grey-white stones present were in fact Purbeck Stone.



Both Portland Stone and Purbeck Stone can appear similar to the naked eye. But under the microscope they appear rather different. Using a portable USB microscope to investigate a sample of Portland Stone from Mr Webster's collection, I discovered that it is made up of oolites, tiny balls of calcite accumulation, which forms a dense stone suitable for use as a high quality building stone (Photo 1, left). This stone can be found in abundance in the building fabric of the Priory.



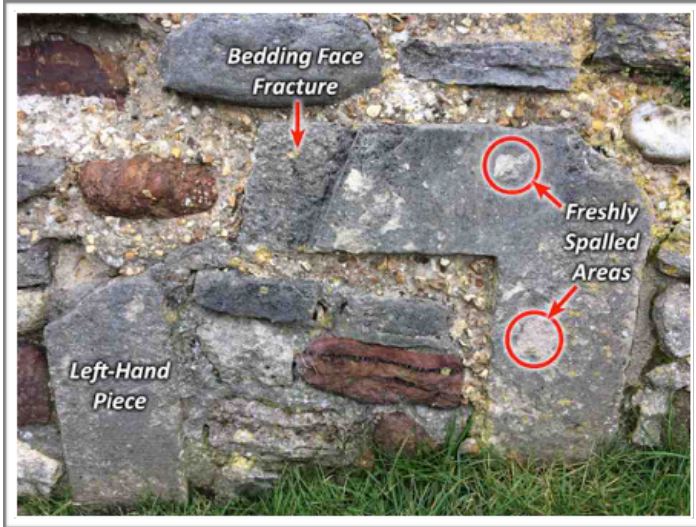
**Photo 1:** Left - Oolites in Portland Stone upper layer of stone and mortar; Right - *Viviparus* and other fossil shells in Purbeck Marble

All the stones from the Purbeck Group, on the other hand, are comprised of minute fossilised freshwater bivalve and gastropod shells. The plain grey-white Purbeck Stone contains a scattering of tiny fossilised *Ostracod* shells embedded amongst various bivalve shells, and these appear as tiny brown specks in the stone. The ornamental Purbeck Marble contains tiny *Viviparus* embedded with a variety of other shells (Photo 1, right). A third type of Purbeck stone is Downs Vein, a flaky stone similar to slate, which contains tiny *Neomiodon* bivalve shells.

It seems that a box shaped feature in the southwest corner of the Keep was firstly identified as being a window casement, and secondly that it was made of Portland Stone (Photo 2).

In the first instance, the cut and facing of the stone meant it could not possibly have been a window casement (although a buried window casement was allegedly found by the Ministry of Works in the 1950s). The feature is actually in two parts: an inverted L-shaped piece forming the top

and right hand vertical and a second piece forming the left hand vertical of the 'box'.



**Photo 2:** The L-shaped stone in the southwest corner of the keep, with a left-hand vertical piece giving the impression of a box or window shape

In the top of the L-shape, one can see that a large piece of the stone flaked off in a clean break at some time in the past. In addition, there was evidence of fresh spalling on the surface due to the extreme cold weather we experienced earlier this year. According to my stonemason friend, stones used for building walls were generally laid with their strata horizontally, not vertically, to increase their strength and to prevent the occurrence of spalling and flaking. Also medieval window frames were never carved in one piece, but from sections joined together, as can clearly be seen on the Constable Hall's surviving window frames. So the placing of this feature seems out of sorts with standard building conventions.

In the second instance, when the freshly spalled areas of the L-shaped stone were examined with the USB microscope, I saw evidence of the *Neomiodon* fossil shells consistent with Downs Vein as described above (Photo 3). There was no evidence of the *ooliths* that make up Portland Stone present anywhere in the L-shaped stone. Further, the flaked-off areas of the L-shaped feature are consistent with the way Downs Vein tends to flake off,



**Photo 3:** Fossil *Neomiodon* shells in Downs Vein Stone

confirming that this feature is definitely Downs Vein and not Portland Stone.

According to Mr Webster, Downs Vein was used primarily as paving for floors and certainly would not have been suitable for a wall, much less a window casement. The L-shaped of the stone is consistent with it being originally cut to fit on the floor around the projections formed by a fireplace or staircase. So what is it doing in the Keep's wall? The stone was more likely taken from another building elsewhere and used to repair the walls of the Keep much later in its

history. The Ministry of Works reputedly repaired the base of the Keep in the 1950s, while there is evidence of earlier repair work being carried out in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*If you would like to read the full discussion, I would be happy to make my copy available on loan to TCA members only. Any feedback, comments or criticism of my ideas presented will also be welcome.*

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## **HERITAGE AT RISK: ANOTHER BLOW FOR THE HIGHCLIFFE CASTLE WALL?**

**Roger Donne**

Regular readers of our newsletter may recall the December 2014 issue in which member Adrian Tattersfield described his involvement, along with that of several others of our membership, in a county-wide project to carry out an external survey of the state of Grade II listed buildings; TCA had volunteered to cover the Christchurch area. The project was funded by Historic England (then part of English Heritage) and run by Claire Pinder, the archaeologist based with the Dorset County Council who is responsible for the maintenance of the Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER). As I

recall, Adrian undertook a survey of the range of buildings in Burton, whereas I decided to look at those in Highcliffe and Mudeford. In Highcliffe several of the listed items were not buildings at all, but structures such as milestones or walls and I was particularly interested by the remaining length of the former wall to the grounds of Highcliffe Castle, running for some distance on the southern side of Lymington Road on the western approaches to Highcliffe. In the same December 2014 newsletter I wrote a short piece about this early 19<sup>th</sup> century wall and its unusual construction of ‘Hitch’s Patent Bricks’, which was one of the reasons for its Grade II listing.



**Photo 1:** *The demolished section of wall*

Sadly the wall has recently suffered quite extensive damage due to a traffic collision resulting in the demolition of several metres of the wall (Photo 1). Just how it will be restored is a mystery, since the original bricks are no longer produced commercially. Possibly some bricks may be salvaged and reused although the interlocking nature of these patent bricks seems to have resulted in the majority of them being fractured in the collision (Photo 2, left) and not breaking along the lines of mortar as would have happened with the usual rectangular bricks. Unfortunately, the wall is adjacent to a busy main road and already bears the scars of many lesser traffic incidents and is subject to other examples of wear and tear, such as damage by tree roots (Photo 2, right), and incongruous repair with inappropriate materials. Unfortunately our built heritage is continually at risk, whether by accident or neglect, and this sad spectacle is just another reminder.



*Photo 2: Left - Section showing the interlocking style of the bricks; Right - The damaged caused by tree roots in another section of the wall*

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## **MILLHAMS: AUGERING FOR A CHANNEL**

### **Mike Tizzard**

Apart from the main medieval mill site, most of the archaeological investigation at Millhams gardens has consisted of digging an extensive grid of 1 metre square test pits. This was partly to track the course of an additional channel, which seemed to run more or less diagonally across the garden in a north west/south east direction. It was also to investigate what else was going on there 'below ground' so to speak.

In nearly all the pits we dug we found pieces of medieval pottery and a few other objects, such as nails, oyster shells and even small amounts of red ochre, all of a similar date to that found on the mill site and therefore possibly contemporary with it.

What became clear was that the ground in the northern part of the garden was originally quite low lying and was either subjected to frequent flooding or had been some sort of pond at some time.

Something else that turned up in some of the pits in this area were the roots and stumps of small trees (possibly willow, as many willow leaves were found in some of the lower sediments we dug through). The trees may have been killed off by later flooding of that area. Their position in the sediment layers suggests that they post-date the deposits of medieval objects. The tree stumps were subsequently buried under further mixed layers of silt and sand.



There is an indication here that there was a significant rise the general sea level around perhaps the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century. The mill seems to have gone out of use during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The whole area around the Millhams garden then appears to have been abandoned and was subsequently built up over a period of time with different layers of mixed sand and silt (between 1 and 2m) until its present level. Only the top 0.3m consist of general loamy topsoil, probably created over the last one to two hundred years through modern garden/agriculture activities. Most of the finds from the topsoil, however, only date from the last 100 years or so. We have yet to find any artefacts in the garden dating from the post-medieval period to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In light of this, a study of historic sea level rises to see if anything may reflect our findings, may prove a worthwhile endeavour!

During 2018 we changed tactics somewhat with our study of the garden, instead of digging test pits, which were time-consuming, we decided to auger it instead.

First we used a small 1-metre long auger with a 25mm diameter, later dubbed “Little T”, but this proved completely inadequate so I took on the task of making a much longer one.

With some bits and pieces from my garage I constructed an auger approximately 2.2 metres long from an aluminium tube and a short length of angle iron. This one was called “Big T” by one of our members (Photo 1).

The sampling section of the new auger was only about 0.3 metres long, so we had to take a number of samples and measure the depth as we went down until we hit hard gravel (in most cases). The gravel turned out to be grey river gravel, indicating that at least the northern



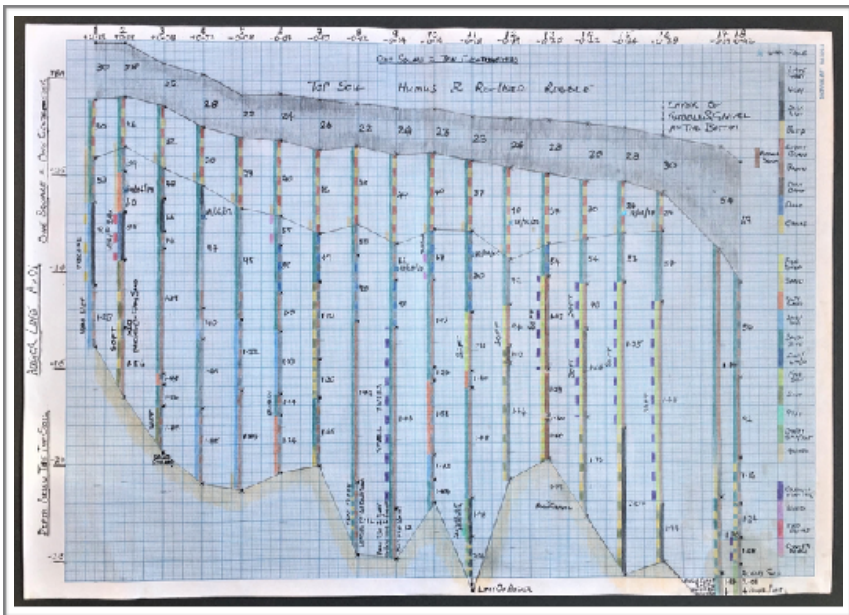
**Photo 1:** Mike and “Big T”



end of the garden was subjected to flowing water most of the time. The depth of the overlying sediments ranged between 1.5 and 2 metres.

So far we have only sampled four lines about 17 auger holes in each line. We started the first line of augers about half way up the garden, north from the mill site, with each subsequent line placed 4 metres to the south of the previous one. Each line started from close to the millstream on the west and ran towards the creek on the east. The auger holes in each line were placed about 2 metres apart.

Reflecting our previous pit digging, it would appear that a good part of the northern end of the garden was low lying and had flowing water running over it at some time, although to get a more accurate picture of what was going on there, we will need to extend augering to that area (Photo 2).



**Photo 2:** Graph plotting the layers and depth of Auger Line 1 (vertical scale exaggerated) - compiled by Steve Fox.

Lines 3 and 4, moving south towards the donkey shed, also reflect our previous findings that the ground below is generally rising in height, with a brief dip where the possible channel is running. Here it appears that the natural subsoil is no longer the grey river gravel of the northern area, or the

natural orange gravel we have seen elsewhere, but a fine pale orange silt with thin layers of sand (some of which has a blue/green hue due to a small iron content). Just above the subsoil is a thick layer of dark brown to dark grey silt which may be the original medieval occupation layer because it contains deposits of medieval pottery. The dark colour of this layer is probably due to organic matter and is between 1 and 1.5 metres below the present ground.

Something that became apparent as each line progressed towards the small silted-up creek on the east side of the garden, is that at sometime in the past the creek was much wider and deeper than it is today. It may also have had some timber revetting as evidenced by the few pieces of rotted wood that came up in the auger at some depth. This is not conclusive, though, as there is a great deal of made-up ground in this area and there are now many small trees and bushes that have grown up around the creek, making it difficult to auger effectively.

Hopefully we will be back in the Spring to carry on with the augering to get a better picture of what's going on there.

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**TCA website & blog:** <http://christchurchantiquarians.wordpress.com>

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