

EXETER CONSISTORY COURT

MUSBURY

1. On 10 February 2001 the Incumbent and Churchwardens of St Michael, Musbury, petitioned this Court in respect of the “installation of ringing floor and stairs in tower, as in drawing No.1, July 2000, by David Highet architect and quotation of 25 September 2000 by the Bucknall Partnership”. The Petition was supported by a resolution of the Parochial Church Council of 8 July 1999 in these terms: “Ringing Floor. The architect has produced some drawings and a brief report on the feasibility of a ringing floor for the Tower. He estimated the cost for the work is between £3,000 and £4,000. Discussion followed regarding the various benefits of the project. The Rector proposed and was seconded by Mrs Ann Veit that we go ahead with the floor and commence the fundraising. The meeting voted in favour with none against and one abstention.” English Heritage were notified of the proposals and raised no objection. Further, the Local Planning Authority, the East Devon District Council, was also notified and raised no objection. The Diocesan Advisory Committee was consulted and recommended the proposed works.
2. Letters of objection were, however, received from three people: the two Churchwardens (who were then also petitioners) and from a Mr Don Welch. One of the Churchwardens (Colonel A.J.M. Drake) was content that I should take his objection into account in reaching my decision, without his becoming a party to these proceedings. The second Churchwarden, having similarly indicated that she

was content for me to take her objection into account, subsequently, following discussion with the choir, withdrew her objection. The remaining objector (Mr Welch) did not further respond to the Registry. It is in these circumstances that I must determine whether or not a Faculty should be granted.

3. As things stand at present, St Michael's Church, Musbury, enjoys not only an enthusiastic choir but also an enthusiastic team of bell-ringers. There is, however, at present, no ringing floor within the west tower, and both choir and bell-ringers have to share the same space, in the west tower, before services. For this reason, there has been discussion, during the last few years, of the possibility of erecting a ringing floor, so that the ringers can ring from that floor, and the choir can robe and prepare themselves for the service, from the ground floor. On the understanding that this proposal met with general approval, the bell-ringers have apparently, by their enthusiasm, raised significant sums of money for the very purpose of creating the ringing floor. If this project were not now to go ahead, there would plainly arise problems with regard to the return of such funds as have been collected for this particular purpose; but that should not, in my view, be allowed to become a determining factor.

4. The scheme does have inevitable disadvantages. The appearance of the church, looking west, may be adversely affected. The amount of light entering the church from the west is bound to be significantly diminished. Colonel Drake has also made the point that it appears that the platform will be set a level which will interfere with

the electrical supply apparatus, which may, in turn, have to be relocated. There may also be a problem with a hatchment hanging on the north wall of the tower.

5. On the other hand, it does appear to me that the proposal will have distinct advantages. Principally, it will provide not only space for the choir in which to robe and to prepare for the service, but it will also provide ^{for} the band of ringers ^{for} ~~with~~ their own activities.
6. There is obviously much to be said on either side. But, on balance, I am persuaded that this is a project which is worthy of support, and accordingly I propose to grant the Faculty which has been sought.

Daniel Conant

9 July 2001

SIR DAVID CALCUTT Q.C.

Chancellor