# Tintern Abbey part 3: Archaeology

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| Tintern Abbey, Cadw’s most ambitious conservation project in decades. Archaeology | Information cards |
| Will Davies Inspector of Ancient Monuments | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera. |
| We’re in the East End of one of Britain's most famous Cistercian abbey churches, and we know that it's full of archaeology.. |  |
| So, under our feet, there may have been floors. We think most of the Tintern ones have been removed at various points in the 18th and 19th centuries, but we can't be sure |  |
| We have geophysical surveys, radar surveys showing us that, as you would expect, there are a lot of burials in here, we know of some of them, |  |
| some very high status people, important people, the Welsh history, several of the marshals of Chepstow, somewhere in the east end of this church, | Close up photo of the grave effigy of William Marshal |
| William Herbert of Raglan and his wife, their children, we've records of their tombs; a number of abbots. | Aerial video of Raglan Castle from the south. |
| But the more important the person, the more likely they are to be buried at the East End, or as close to the east end of the church as possible. | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera. |
| We're in an area roughly where behind you the high altar would have stood, which has gone in the presbytery or the choir end of the church. | Graphic: Illustration by Terry Ball  Cutaway reconstruction of the abbey church focusing on location of the high altar. |
| We know that there would have been steps up and down into different bits of the church. We have walling between the different arches in the arcades. | Cutaway refocuses on walls between pillars in the church |
| We know of altars, the range of structures against the east wall, having been excavating for a while now, some of them are less convincing than others; they might be early 20th century restoration works | Cutaway refocuses on altars at the easternmost end of the church before zooming back out. |
| We know all this stuff is here; and the problem at Tintern is, it’s right underneath the surface and the scaffold will be straight on top of it; | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera. |
| So we're worried about scaffold poles crushing archaeology, really significant archeology: not just the individuals, |  |
| but the Cistercian archaeology of one of the most famous sites in Europe – but also the suitability of some of this ground for scaffold poles to rest on. |  |
| What we don't want to happen is for a scaffold carrying hundreds of tons of planking and people to disappear into a void or softer earth: perhaps a grave fill. |  |
| So what we're doing, we’ve got a very good contractor, Black Mountains Archaeology on site. | Archaeologist extending a trench using a mattock. |
| We’ve set a brief to effectively evaluate the areas phase by phase along with the conservation work. |  |
| So we’ve done about a third of the church here so it’s half of the east end, we’ve got the great east window in front of me now, the presbytery, the choir and the high altar somewhere in here; | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera. |
| and the crossing, underneath where the belfry would have been, and the South Transept, which had chapels in its own aisle. | View of the east end of the abbey church, moving left to right showing the structures. |
| We can see things on the ground: we can see bits of flooring sitting underneath some of the piers. | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera. |
| So you’re simply right on the archaeology, but we don't actually know. |  |
| So rather than just sink lots of trenches or test pits where we think the uprights will be, well, that's no good if we suddenly find a skeleton in it or a piece of intact flooring. |  |
| So what you have to do is move and move and move. It's the only real way you can understand the archaeology to be able to plan the scaffold is to strip the whole area off. | A drone flies slowly through the east end, showing the cleared ground. |
| The other reason we do this is not to just dig lots of holes, sterilise areas of archaeology, and not learn anything about a major monument. |  |
| This is also a great opportunity to find out a lot more about Tintern Abbey, its layout, its development and what happened to it in the 18th and 19th centuries. |  |
| So we can see things that don't seem to be medieval features. We've got things on the floor laid out as walling which seem to be, not fiction | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera. |
| but they’ve been put there by the Ministry of Works potentially, or their predecessors back at the Office of Woods in the 1900s. | View of the church floor showing where old walls have been marked out, finishing on a grave slab. |
| where they’ve effectively maybe dug out remains of foundations and evoked lines on the floor. |  |
| We've got things that are marked out; we've got grave slabs on the surface - well, they weren't there in the medieval period, there were somewhere down there. | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera. |
| So we’re understanding how the site was laid out as a tourist attraction and a monument in the 18th, 19th, 20th centuries. | Graphic: By permission of the National Library of Wales, Creative Archives Licence  19th century engraving showing Victorian visitors viewing the site. |
| We're already getting a bit of that now, so the plan we have in the guidebook will probably change - not drastically, but lots of the details that we don't entirely understand will become a lot clearer.  End. | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera. |