

## BEHIND THE PLASTERBOARD

I was wondering what to write for the Turvey News and I was looking for the letter opener. 'It's probably fallen behind the cupboard', some said. Hmm, what about an article entitled 'Behind the Cupboard'? Why not, but that wouldn't get anywhere, only fluff and lost letter openers to write about. But what about 'Behind the Plasterboard'? Not very interesting for some people, only stud wall timber, and insulation, if you are lucky. Here at the Abbey things are different, and a whole different world hides behind the plasterboard on the top floor. How do I know? Because I was there when the plasterboard was put up, not in 1604, I hasten to add, but in 1980. In order to conform to fire regulations we had to do a lot of alterations to the top floor where rushes had been used behind the horsehair plaster, they were considered to be a fire risk.

Only inches away from our everyday life, behind the plasterboard, there are nooks and crannies and voids telling the tale of a different Abbey to the one we know. Thick oak rafters which once supported roofs with stone tiles—bits of stone tiles have been found, the tops of the thick stone walls with their stone-rubble and clay infill. Intriguing stonework, was this once an outside wall? Baffling.

Installing our new lift last spring and re-decorating the library, which turned into the Big Job, probably created more puzzles than it solved—the old walls behind the hardboard and framework were full of old windows and doors, and the external corner of a building was clearly visible. Everything was duly measured and photographed—and puzzled over!

Talking of buildings, the season is fast approaching when attention seems to turn to chimneys, and Who might be arriving down one. The Abbey doesn't have any really ancient chimney stacks left, one seems to be visible in an early 1800's watercolours by John Higgins, but no longer exists.

An idea! Maybe if we could have a peek at Father Christmas' log books, surely he keeps them, we might have a much better idea of what Turvey Abbey looked like in ages past—and I'm sure this method of research would be of interest to the Turvey History Society!

We at the Abbey wish you all a very Happy Christmas, ho, ho, ho.



Sr Benedict, Turvey Abbey