

Chapel Crypt

In Dr Edward Imprey book the White Tower he references that St Mary, and St Peter Ad Vincula were in existence circa 1050, probably consecrated on the feast of St Peter. The Roman wall that runs to the East of the White Tower, there is a slight bend in the wall, and it was common to build small posterns or gates on these bends, and again it was very common to build Chapels on or near gates, St Botolph's Aldgate is a good example of this.

The Normans invade England in 1066, and William orders the Building of the White Tower 1078, at that time there was a Saxon Chapel on the site of the present St Peter Ad Vincula. There is no evidence that this Chapel was taken down or moved by The Normans. There is no evidence that the present Crypt was the sight of the original Chapel.

By the reign of Henry III (19 October 1216 to 16 November 1272) The Chapel is within the Tower, Henry obviously considers the Chapel his and order improvements, he issued a warrant on the 12th December 1241, directing building and improvement work which included the chancel (the part of a church near the altar, reserved for the clergy and choir, and typically separated from the nave, where the congregation sits, by steps or a screen) of St Peter to be repaired, and in 1251, bells are ordered by the King.

On the death of Henry in 1272 a mass is ordered for the repose of his soul, and his son Edward I (King of England 1272 to 1307) he orders the annual payment of 50 shillings to a priest as recompense for such services.

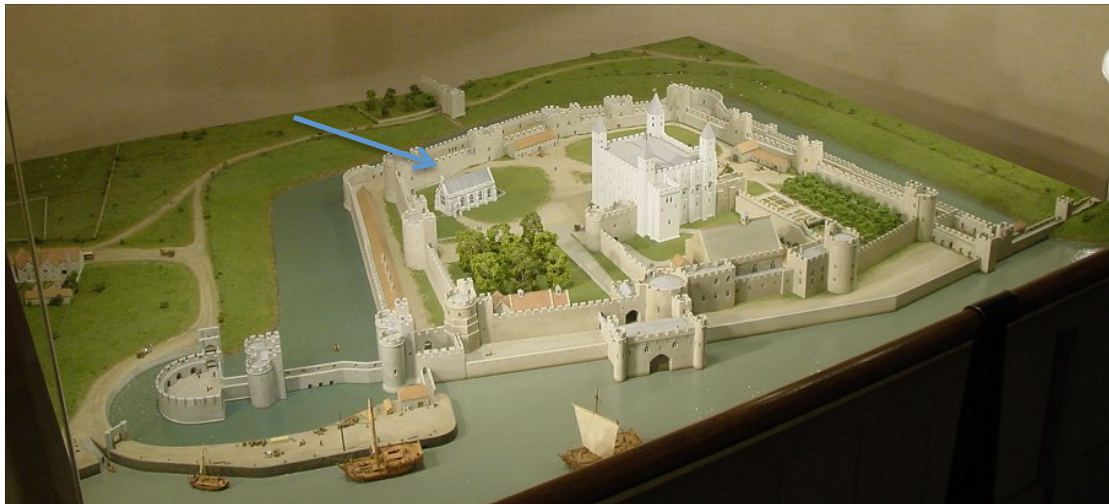


Figure 1, Diorama of the Tower 1335, showing the Chapel.

In 1305, Edward I issues a warrant for the rebuilding of the Chapel, a warrant dated Fotheringay 11th July he authorizes the Constable of the Tower Ralph De Sandwich (Constable of the Tower 1285 to 1289 then again 1289 to 1303) to be reimburse for the various outlays incurred by him, in the construction of our new Chapel within the tower. No images of Edward I's Chapel have survived and it is possible that it may

have been positioned where the crypt now stands to the west of the Fifteenth-Century storehouses.

Edward I, Chapel at this time is split in two the North Side St Marys and the main Chapel on the South Side to St Peter a hagioscope or squint, connects the two, this is today obscured by the Blount memorial.

Edward I new Chapel, the second on the site, although it could be speculated that William I, may have rebuilt, what during his reign, could be considered an out dated Saxon Chapel, so the present Chapel could be the fourth on the sight. There has been speculation that the Chapel was moved forward and the present Crypt was the location of the original Chapel before Edwards rebuild, any physical evidence of this would be in the North Wall of the present Chapel. The door and passageway was re-opened during the renovations of 1968 as a means of entering the crypt from the North aisle of the Chapel This might have been the original entrance.

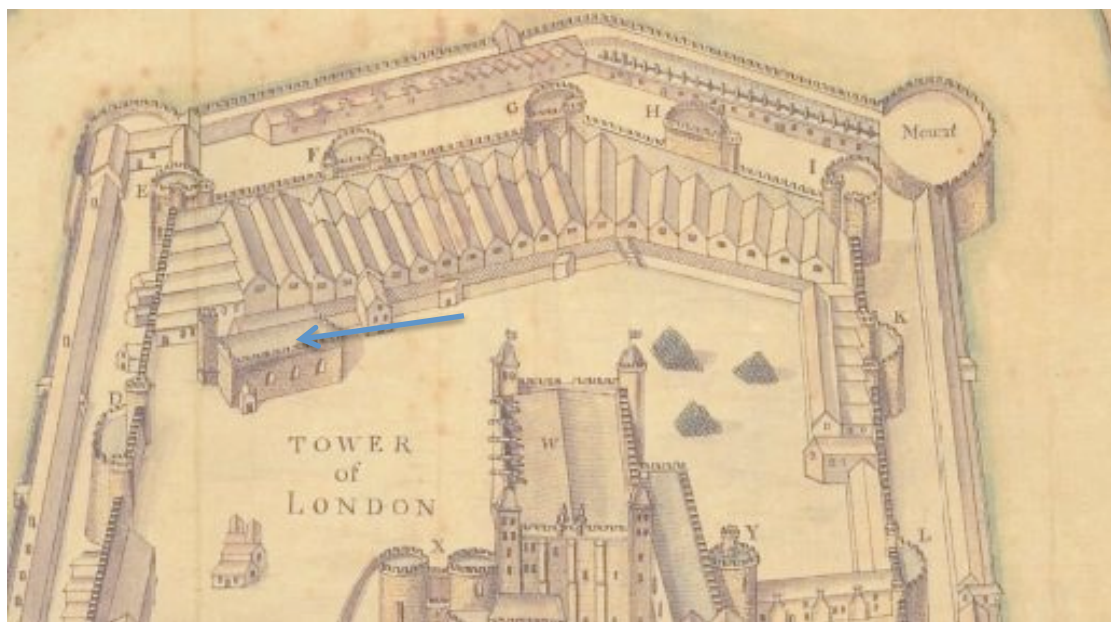


Figure 2 - Excerpt of the copy of the Haiward and Gascoyne Map of 1597 made for the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1741, focusing on the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula and the Tudor Storehouses, arrow points out the Chapel.

During the reign of Henry VIII stores are built to the North of the Chapel, these stores and Chapel are destroyed in a fire in 1512, and the Chapel is rebuilt bills for this are paid in 1520. Figure 2 Shows the first image of the Chapel in 1597, and the reign of Henry VIII a large storehouse is built against the inner wall, which incorporates the West Wall, Devereux Tower and it is also attached to the North Wall of the Chapel. These stores are in the location of the present Crypt, the entrance to the Chapel is via a door on the South West Side.

It can also be noted that the Chapel today is at ground level, to enter the Chapel today you descend some stairs, so it can be speculated

that the Chapel today is the ground level and the Crypt is the ground floor of the Tudor Store house.

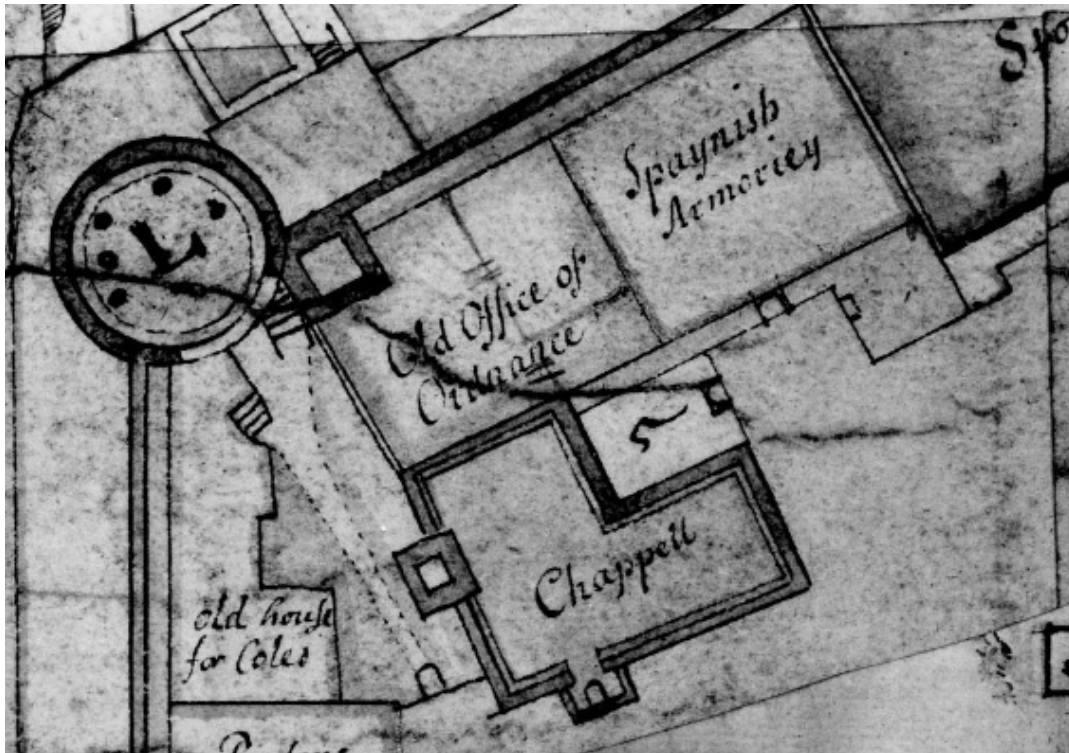


Figure 3 - Excerpt of a plan of the Tower showing the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula and the adjacent buildings (c.1681-2).

Figure 3. The plan drawn in 1681-1682, shows buildings in this area being described as the “Old Ordnance Office” and the “Spanish Armoury”, seemingly separate from the rest of the Tudor storehouses. The line of the Devereux Wall could be the division of these two buildings.

1683 The area is converted into accommodation for Gunners, the Ordnance Office had moved to its new location a building that runs along the South lawn of the White Tower between the Lanthorn and Wakefield Towers in September 1673, this was demolished in 1840

Note that the Chapel is “L” in shape, this was changed into the present vestry in 1876-77.

The gunners accommodation (The Old Ordnance Office and the Spanish Armoury) were probably demolished as part of the construction of the Grand Storehouse in 1688.

The vaulting was paved over in 1691, and then built on, these buildings might have been used as small arms workshops, and the new store houses used to store saltpetre and grenades.

By the time of the fire in 1841, the area appears to have developed into a yard, surrounded by workshops, with a passageway leading into it from the Grand Storehouse

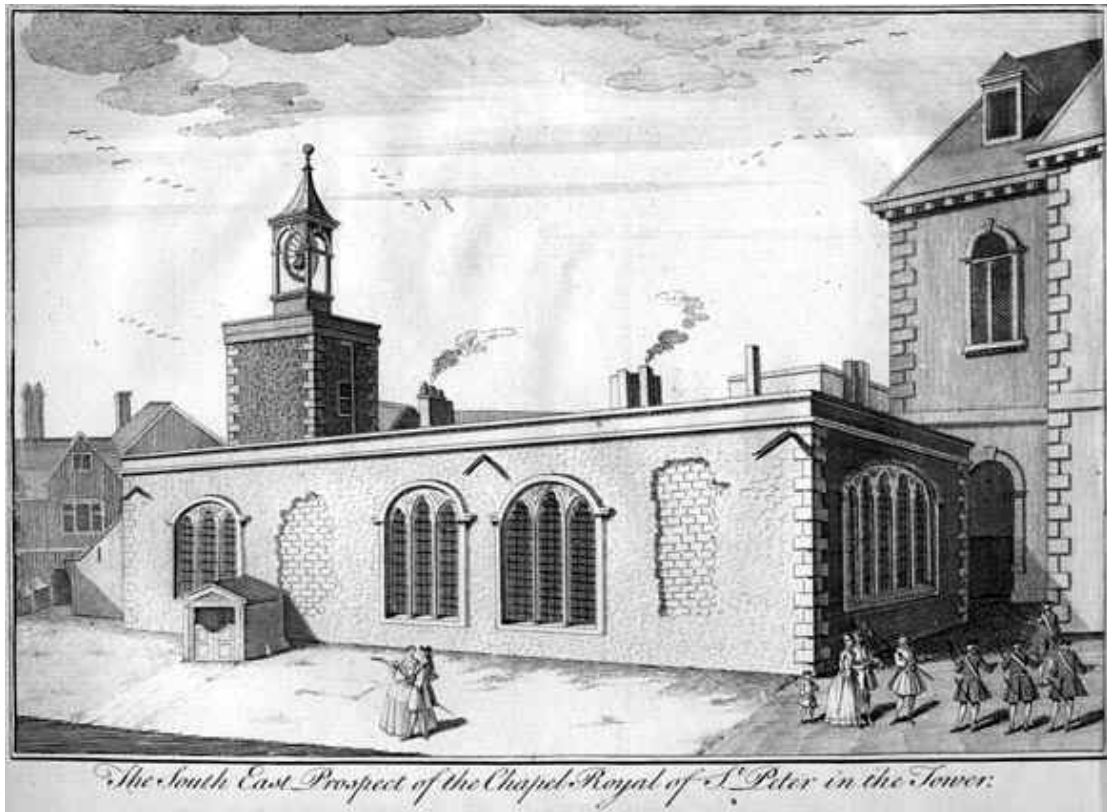


Figure 4 – Chapel 18 century, with the Grand Storehouse to the right

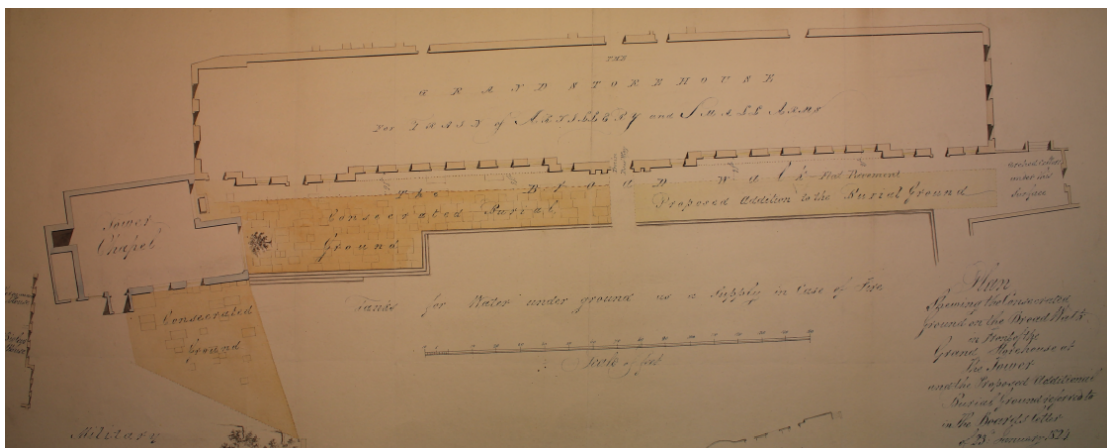


Figure 5 - Plan showing the Grand Storehouse and the burial ground on the Boardwalk (1824).

Figure 5, The story of the Crypt as it is to day starts in 1841 when the grand Storehouse burns down, at the time a large grave yard runs from the Chapel along the front of the grand storehouse as far as the present entrance to the Jewels house, and there are plan to extend it as far as the North East Corner.

A second graveyard runs from the along the south wall of the Chapel from the East wall to the door. The grave stones in both grave yards are laid flat.



Figure 6 – The destruction of the Grand Storehouse by fire in 1841

Figure 6, shows the fire of 1841, the Grand Storehouse can be seen behind the Chapel.

The decision to build the Waterloo Barracks, further forward than the Grand Storehouse over the grave yard, problem seem solved by converting the now partially below ground chamber into crypt, this was completed by October 1844, when it was consecrated by the Bishop of London.

Some of the human remains were also moved to a graveyard to the outside of the East of the Tower of London, this was dug up during the construction of Tower Bridge, between 1888 and 1894 apparently resulting in a demand for money by the company building Tower bridge, for the repatriation of human remains that had originally belonged to the tower grave yard.

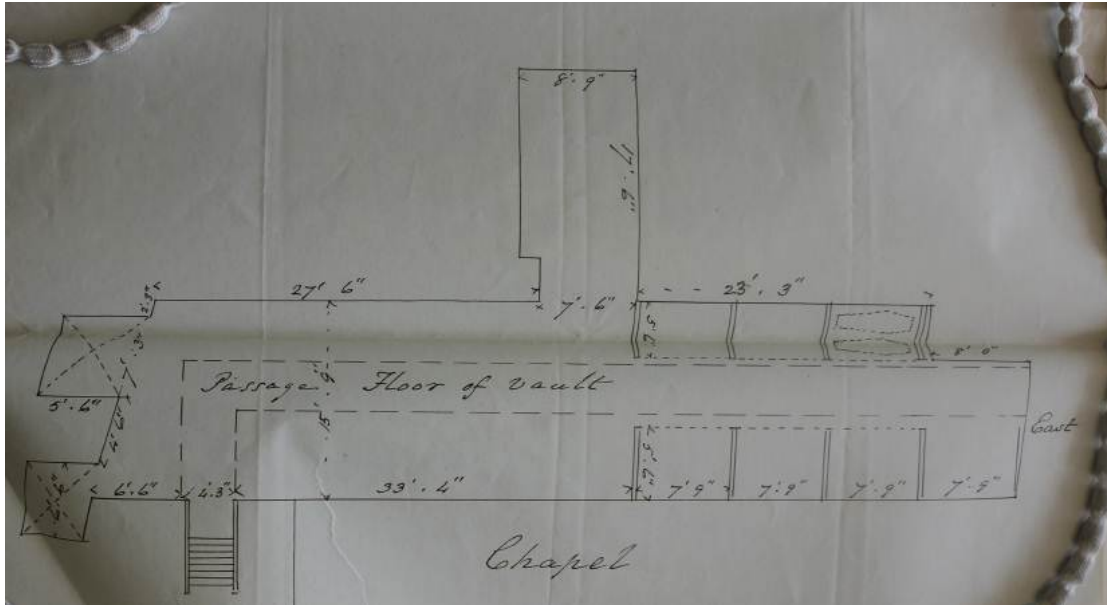


Figure 7 - Plan of the Crypt of St Peter ad Vincula (1844). The earliest plan of the crypt, which accompanied the appeal for its consecration.

Figure 7, The plan suggests that the crypt may have only been accessible through a narrow passageway running through the structure, to the West of the present Chapel.

If this was the case then the large, open space which now exists between the shrine to Sir Thomas More and the entrance to the vestry is a later addition to the layout.

The next big event in respect to the crypt, is the exhumation of human remains by the royal commission in 1876. Human remains were moved into the Crypt and put into two large pots, which are in the wall behind the present tomb of John Holland on the North West part of the Chapel. A vestry was built on the North East part of the Chapel, somewhere for the choir, and chaplain to prepare for services. In 1938 a passage was built to connect the vestry and the crypt

Meeting House – The room now used as an office, was an armoury store and had presumably been used in this manner since the construction of the Devereux Wall. This led to the creation of the current doorway through to the office from the crypt's north-running alcove. There is also an alcove in the North of the office, dating from the 1660, which connected with a building connecting the store and the outer ward.

At the Governor's request the grille separating the shrine to Sir Thomas More and the Meeting House was also installed to protect the new monument from the chaplain's proposed youth club. This was at some time taken down and replaced as part of the recent refurbishment.

Shrine to Sir Thomas More – After the canonization of Sir Thomas More by Pius XI in 1935, there had been at least one attempt to relocate his remains to a Catholic Shrine, however, the request was denied

Possibly in response to such requests the decision was made to install a permanent monument to Sir Thomas More in the crypt in 1968.

At first the shrine was planned to be placed in the alcove running North, but this changed after the plans were adapted to include the addition of the Meeting House.

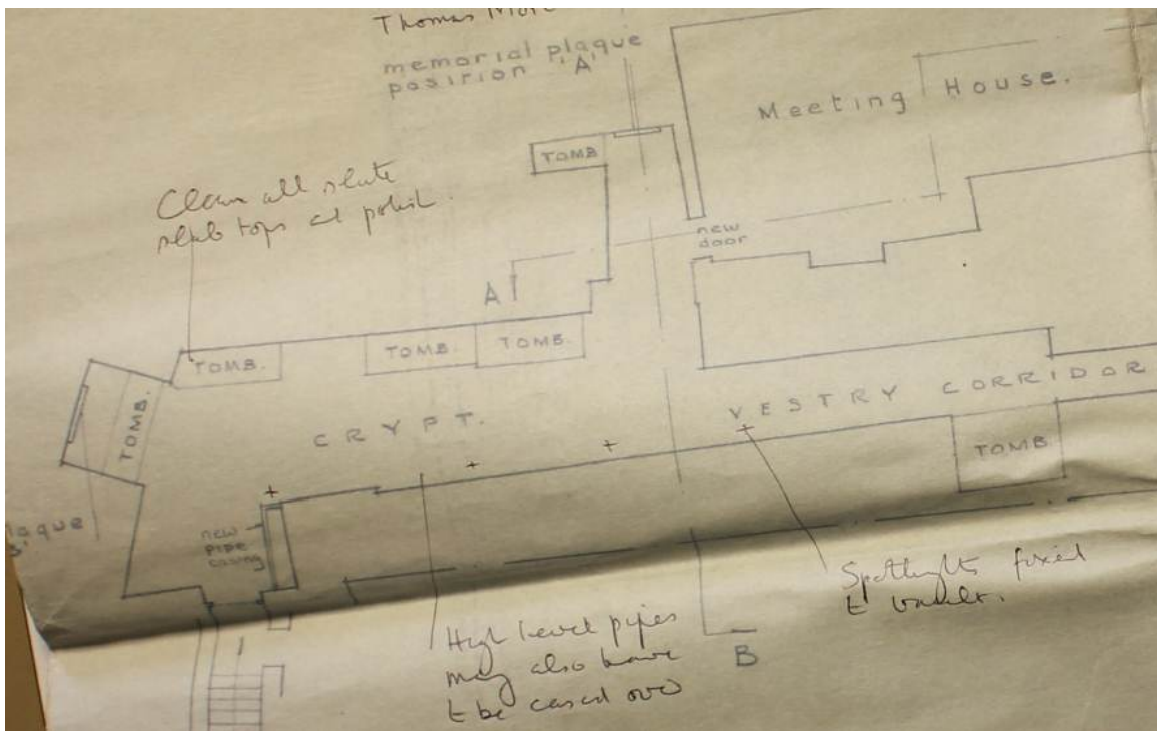


Figure 8 - Plan of the work undertaken in the Chapel crypt in 1968-1970. The two proposed locations for the Thomas More plaque are marked as 'A' and 'B'.



Figure 9 - The tomb of Colonel John Gurwood

Figure 9 show the tomb of Col John Gurwood, was the Deputy-Lieutenant of the Tower, committed suicide Christmas day 1845, after a public row with William Napier.



Figure 10 - The present memorial to Sir Thomas Moor



Figure 11 - Plan showing the construction of the crypt and its features by time period, from Dr George Roberts Report on the Crypt of St Peter ad Vincula December 2013.



Figure 12 - Plan showing expansion of the crypt for Chapel use by period, from Dr George Roberts Report on the Crypt of St Peter ad Vincula December 2013.

Date	Event	Remarks
1050	Chapel built	
1078 - 1100	White Tower Constructed	
1241	Henry III, carries out restoration work to the Chapel	
1301	Edward I takes down the Saxon Chapel and rebuilds a new Chapel on the same site	
1512	Chapel and Tudor stores burn down	
1520	Completion of the present Chapel	
1597	Picture showing the present Chapel and Tudor stores houses	
1683	Ordinance offices moved and the area converted into accommodation for gunners	
1688	Grand Storehouse constructed	
1841	Grand storehouse burns down	
1844	Consecrated by the Bishop of London.	
1845	Waterloo Barracks Built	
1876	Royal Commission restore the Chapel and move human remains from under the floor into the crypt	
1876	A door is discovered between the Chapel and crypt	
1876-77	Vestry built to the North East of the Chapel	
1938	In 1938 a passage was built to connect the vestry and the crypt	
1935	Sir Thomas Moor, canonized by Pope Pius XI	
1969	Sir Gerald Walter Robert Templer, Constable of the tower from 1965 to 1970 Letters for a memorial to Sir Thomas Moor	
1970	The works extended the size of the crypt to provide a meeting room (now used as the Chapel office)	
1971	Memorial to Sir Thomas Moor	
1976	The door discovered in 1976, is opened and is the internal entrance from the Chapel to the crypt	

References:

1. Dr George Roberts Report on the Crypt of St Peter ad Vincula
December 2013
2. The White Tower by Dr Edward Imprey.
3. Bells in the Chapel
http://london.lovesguide.com/peter_advincula.htm
4. Notices of the Historic Persons Buried in the Chapel of St. Peter
Ad Vincula in the Tower of London (1877) by Doyne Courtney
Bell.