

Report of Work under Archaeological Supervision and Control

St Margaret's Church, Felbrigg, Norfolk

ENF ref. 144675

Prepared for Felbrigg PCC



Sarah Bates

Report No. 39

August 2018

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Project name	St Margaret's Church, water pipe connection
Parish	Felbrigg
District	North Norfolk
Grid reference	TG 1974 3901
NHER Ref.	ENF 144675
NCCES CNF Ref.	47820
Date of fieldwork	2nd – 4th July 2018
Accession number	2018.234

Summary

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during installing a water supply at St Margaret's Church, Felbrigg.

A small trench dug outside the blocked west doorway exposed the footing to part of the tower wall and enabled the recording of some worked stone at the base of the south jamb and below the present threshold. The recorded elements suggested that the doorway was contemporary with the construction of the tower and that, possibly, the threshold may have been at a slightly lower level – or that there may have been a step up into the tower.

The water pipe was laid by impact moling within the churchyard. Trenches dug for the water pipe beneath the track to the west of the church and in field to the south and south-west revealed natural sand and gravel, sandy subsoil and topsoil. A concentration of flint rubble in a low-lying part of the field had probably been imported to the site to consolidate a muddy area.

Two iron nails and a can ring pull were the only finds made during the work.

1.0 Introduction

St Margaret's Church is situated within Felbrigg Park about 600m south-east of Felbrigg Hall which dates from the 17th-century. The church is about a kilometre south-west of the present village and 4km SW of Cromer on the north Norfolk coast (TG 1974 3901).

The present work involved installing a water supply to the church. The work was undertaken by contractors Wells Services (Norfolk) Ltd for Felbrigg PCC.

The work included laying a new water pipe. This ran from beneath the blocked west doorway of the church tower, westwards below the church path, then southwards beneath the track outside the churchyard and into the field to the south-west of the

church. This enabled connection to an existing water supply for a cattle trough. A short branch of additional water pipe was laid to a new water supply in the adjacent field to the east.

The water pipe was laid in a trench in the fields and trackway outside the churchyard. Within the churchyard it was laid by impact moling beneath the west path. The pipe was taken into the kitchen area within the tower by drilling beneath the tower wall. No archaeological deposits were exposed (the archaeologist was not present when this took place).

The archaeological work involved monitoring and recording during the groundworks (Fig. 1). The work accorded to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Sarah Bates to meet the requirements of a brief set by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (HES ref. CNF47820, Stephen Heywood, 22.11.17).

Felbrigg PCC funded the improvement work at the church.

The archaeological archive will, on completion of the project, be deposited with the Norfolk Historic Environment Record. An OASIS form is included below as Appendix 1.

2.0 Geology and topography

The underlying solid geology of the area is Wroxham Crag Formation sand and gravel deposited during a Quaternary Period environment of estuaries and deltas. The area is within that of rich loams of north-east Norfolk (Williamson 2005) but towards its western edge, where soils become sandier and more acidic being formed from sedimentary sands and gravels created by glacial meltwaters and outwash (British Geological Survey © NERC 2015).

The church is set towards the north side of its churchyard which is surrounded by the gently rolling parkland of the Felbrigg Estate.

A benchmark recorded on the church tower is at 55.81m OD.

3.0 Archaeological and historical background

The existing church comprises square west tower, nave and chancel and north and south porches. The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER 6637) records the church as dating mainly from the 14th and 15th centuries with later additions. There are north and south priest's doors, the former now blocked but originally leading to a vestry which is now ruined. The west doorway to the tower is also blocked as well as chancel north and south windows and some nave windows.

The church is situated in parkland just under 600m to the south-east of 17th century Felbrigg Hall, The exact location of the medieval settlement is unknown but seems likely to have been close to the church. A Medieval road or hollow way is recorded running from south to north 550m to the west of the church and medieval ridge and furrow is visible as earthworks on aerial photographs of an area around and to the south of Felbrigg Hall. Other earthworks suggesting the presence of hollow ways, enclosures and

other features have been identified within The Great Wood to the north of the Hall and medieval pottery and evidence for iron working during that period has been found near the north-east edge of Felbrigg Park.

Three Bronze Age ring ditches and a curvilinear ditch which might be contemporary with them are recorded as cropmarks some 500-600m to the south-east of the church.

A late 18th or early 19th-century enclosure map shows a footpath crossing roughly from east to west from Aylmerton to Felbrigg villages and running along the north side of the churchyard (Norfolk County Council 2011). Later nineteenth-century maps do not show the path from Aylmerton but show the (still existing) track running south-east from Felbrigg Hall to the church and, at that time, continuing across the fields to the south which, then, included many parkland trees, mostly now gone.

A geophysical survey was recently carried out in several areas surrounding St Margaret's Church to look for evidence for any medieval settlement in its vicinity (Archaeological Services WYAS 2013). Anomalies were identified which suggested geological variation and modern/agricultural activity but none indicative of archaeological activity were identified.

4.0 Methodology

Archaeological monitoring aimed to observe and record the presence or absence, location, nature and date of any surviving archaeological deposits within the areas affected by the pipe trenches.

A small area immediately outside the blocked west door and all the trenches outside the churchyard were dug by machine by the site contractors under archaeological control and supervision. The length of pipe beneath the churchyard path (from the west gateway to the church) was laid by the contractors by impact moling from outside the gate towards the church.

The location of the trenches was recorded and trenches were assigned context numbers for the purpose of reference and description. *Pro forma* context sheets were used to record the trenches. General deposits (subsoil and topsoil) were not assigned individual numbers but were recorded on each trench sheet using the trench context number.

Digital photographs recorded the archaeological deposits and the work at the site generally.

No human remains were found during the work.

No finds of archaeological significance were made. No deposits required sampling for environmental assessment.

Site conditions (weather, light and access) were good.

5.0 Results (Figs. 1 and 2, Plates 1-7)

Context numbers are shown in square brackets and listed in Appendix 2.

Excavated trenches were allocated context numbers and are shown in Figure 1. Depths given below were measured from the ground surface.

Work within the churchyard

A small trench was machine-excavated outside the blocked west doorway [1] (Figs 1 and 2, Plate 1). It was 1.90m in length and 0.35m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.80m.

Churchyard soil was recorded in the lower part of the trench [7]. This was slightly orange brown silty sand with occasional small flints and flecks of mortar (the mortar mostly being in its upper part). A probable construction cut for the tower footing was recorded [4] (Fig. 1, Plate 1). It extended northwards about 0.60m westwards from a solid flint footing [6] (see below) and contained brown silty sand with moderate numbers of small to medium-sized angular (broken) flints, some of them with mortar adhering showing that they represented building rubble [5]. The flint footing comprised flints in cream mortar [6]. It extended 0.80m westwards of the tower wall but only 0.30m northwards from beside the south door jamb, not continuing below the wall in the area of the doorway. Its north side ran east to west, perpendicular to the tower wall. This strongly suggested that the doorway was contemporary with the construction of the tower and that the footing was designed to provide additional support for the doorway's arch.

Brown sandy loam topsoil with occasional small flints and rare small fragments of mortar ([8]) was removed by the archaeologist from against the bottom of the southern door jamb where it met the threshold (Plates 2-4). Worked stone blocks, with the same moulding as the jamb above (but unweathered), continued down approximately 0.30m below the present ground surface to the top of the flint footing described above. A thin bedding layer of yellowish cream mortar was seen beneath the stone blocks. The bottom stone had a very neatly cut horizontal chamfer cut into the same single block of stone as the lowest part of the (semi-hexagonal sectioned) upright block of the jamb. The north side of the chamfered face appeared to follow the angle of the door jamb above, running at a slight angle and then with turning obtusely to run perpendicular with the tower wall beneath the concrete threshold (the obtuse corner just visible in Plate 4).

Below the existing concrete threshold [2] at the blocked west doorway some other worked stone blocks were seen [3]. (Fig. 2, Plates 3 and 4). These were only partly exposed and their upper edge was not seen. They lay upon the same mortar bedding layer and had the same chamfered top edge (at the same level) as the block at the bottom of the door jamb. The most obvious interpretation for the horizontal stone blocks is as a former threshold although it seems unusual that such a feature would have had a chamfered edge. The precisely formed stone, however, and its shared nature and position with the door's lower jamb stone suggests that the two were contemporary and, most probably, were intended to be seen.

The water pipe was laid by impact moling from a trench dug outside the west gate. The moling process went smoothly with no significant obstructions apparent *en route*. The soft sandy soil of the site was well-suited to the process although, of course, it is

unknown whether any human remains lay below the church path and there is the possibility that, if present, they would have been affected (either damaged or pushed to one side by the pipe). The pipe entered the west end of the trench by the west door at a depth of 0.55m - about 0.20m above the level from which it was drilled outside the gate.

Work outside the churchyard

The point from which the pipe was mole-drilled was 1.40m west of the churchyard gate (Fig. 1, Plate 5). The trench extended approximately a metre westwards then turned at ninety degrees to run southwards for about 40m to the field gate [10]. The trench ran roughly parallel with the churchyard wall and was 2.0-3.0m to its west. It was 0.35m wide and 0.80m in depth. From between 15m and 20m south of the churchyard gate patches of orange sand with occasional gravel was seen in the bottom of the trench and was a natural, geological deposit. It was overlaid by orange brown silty sand subsoil which included only rare small flints. In the northern part of the trench this subsoil was the lowest deposit reached by the trench, the level of the natural sand rising to the south. At the field gate, at the southern end of trench [10], very sandy subsoil appeared to merge with the natural sand at a depth of 0.50m - becoming sandier with depth beneath that level. The subsoil was overlaid by brown sandy loam topsoil with occasional small flints. Nothing of archaeological interest was seen in trench [10].

The trench ran southwards into the field south-west of the church (Plate 6), then turned south-westwards, north-westwards and south-westwards to the water trough (Fig. 1). The water trough was moved upslope during the present work (its previous site had been prone to becoming muddy). Trench [11] was 0.35m wide and 0.80m deep and the soils exposed by its digging were very similar to those seen in trench [10]. Natural sand was exposed in some areas, overlaid by various sandy silt and silty sand subsoils which became sandier with depth (Plate 7). Subsoil was overlaid by brown sandy loam topsoil. In a slightly lower-lying area was a relative concentration of flint rubble (Fig. 1). This was notable as flint inclusions of any kind were rare within the subsoil elsewhere. The flints had been imported to the field - probably to consolidate a muddy area - possibly this was the area where the trough (or a previous trough) had been sited. Nothing else of note was seen.

An off-shoot of trench was dug leading into the field to the east and a new water point was installed there for the farmer. The soils encountered were the same as those described above, nothing of archaeological interest was seen and no finds were made.

6.0 The finds

Two rusty iron nails and a ring pull from a can were found during metal detecting. They were found in the topsoil from trench [11]. They have not been retained.

7.0 Conclusions

Undisturbed natural sand with patches of gravel was seen in some areas in the bottom of the trenches dug for the water pipe outside the churchyard. Above that was sandy subsoil and the topsoil. The only other notable deposit or feature in the trenches in the fields south of the church was where some flint rubble had been dumped; presumably to help consolidate a muddy area in a low-lying part of the field. No evidence was seen which might suggest the location of the medieval settlement.

Impact moling of the pipe beneath the churchyard path progressed smoothly in the soft sandy soil. There was no indication of obstacles although it is, of course, unknown as to whether any burials exist in the area and whether they may have been affected. No human remains were found during the work within, or outside, the churchyard.

Part of the footing of the west wall of the tower was exposed and recorded. This extended only slightly northwards of the south door jamb showing that the doorway was likely to be an integral part of the original construction of the tower. Some flint rubble found in the probable construction trench for the footing had mortar adhering to it showing that demolition material from had been discarded here.

The exposing of the lower part of the door jamb and the stone blocks with the same chamfer beneath the modern door step suggested that the door threshold was originally at a lower level than presently - it seems unlikely that such carefully cut stone blocks would have been below ground level. This may mean that the floor level within the tower was originally lower than its present level which is the same as that of the existing threshold and the same as floor levels throughout the church. It is also possible that there was a step up into the tower. The reason for the chamfered edge to the stones beneath the doorway is not fully understood as it seems unlikely that such an edge would feature on a threshold or step.

Acknowledgements

The archaeological work was commissioned and funded by Felbrigg PCC. The pipe laying was undertaken by Wells Services (Norfolk) Ltd.

The advice of and interest of Peter Raynor and John Blair (Felbrigg PCC) is gratefully acknowledged.

Archaeological monitoring, recording and interpretation was by Sarah Bates who also prepared this report. Figure 1 is based upon a plan of the church provided by Peter Raynor (Felbrigg PCC).

References:

Archaeological Services WYAS, 2013	<i>Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk, Geophysical Survey</i> , Archaeological Services ,WYAS Report No. 2447
British Geological Survey 2017	http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html
Norfolk County Council 2011	http://www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/
Williamson, T., 2005	'Soil Landscapes' in Ashwin, T. and Davison, A. <i>An Historical Atlas of Norfolk</i> 8-9, (Third Edition)

Appendix 1

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: sarahbat1-323875

Project details

Project name	St Margaret's Church, Felbrigg, water pipe
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during installing a water supply at St Margaret's Church, Felbrigg. A small trench dug outside the blocked west doorway exposed the footing to part of the tower wall and enabled the recording of some worked stone at the base of the south jamb and below the present threshold. The recorded elements suggested that the doorway was contemporary with the construction of the tower and that, possibly, the threshold may have been at a slightly lower level - or that there may have been a step up into the tower. The water pipe was laid by impact moling within the churchyard. Trenches dug for the water pipe beneath the track to the west of the church and in field to the south and south-west revealed natural sand and gravel, sandy subsoil and topsoil. A concentration of flint rubble in a low-lying part of the field had probably been imported to the site to consolidate a muddy area. Two iron nails and a can ring pull were the only finds made during the work.
Project dates	Start: 02-06-2018 End: 04-06-2018
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	144675 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type	FOOTING Medieval
Monument type	THRESHOLD Medieval
Monument type	JAMB Medieval
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK NORTH NORFOLK FELBRIGG St Margaret's Church
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TG 1974 3901 52.903063384511 1.267804924082 52 54 11 N 001 16 04 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Sarah Bates
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Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Sarah Bates
Project director/manager	Sarah Bates
Project supervisor	Sarah Bates
Type of sponsor/funding body	PCC
Name of sponsor/funding body	Felbrigg PCC

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	NHER
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	NHER
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic", "other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Report", "Section"
Entered by	Sarah Bates (SJ.BATES@YAHOO.CO.UK)
Entered on	9 August 2018

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Appendix 2: List of contexts

Context	Type	Area	Category	Description
1	Trench	1	Contractor's trench	trench outside W doorway
2	Masonry	1	Threshold	modern threshold at blocked W doorway
3	Masonry	1	Threshold	stone plinth of threshold below blocked W doorway
4	Cut	1	Construction cut	construction cut from tower footing
5	Deposit	1	Construction cut fill	fill of construction cut [5]
6	Masonry	1	Footing	footing of tower wall/doorway
7	Deposit	1	Layer	churchyard soil
8	Deposit	1	Layer	topsoil
9	Trench	10	Contractor's trench	trench outside W gateway
10	Trench	10	Contractor's trench	trench beneath track W of churchyard
11	Trench	11	Contractor's trench	trench in field to SW of church
12	Deposit	1	Layer	lower topsoil

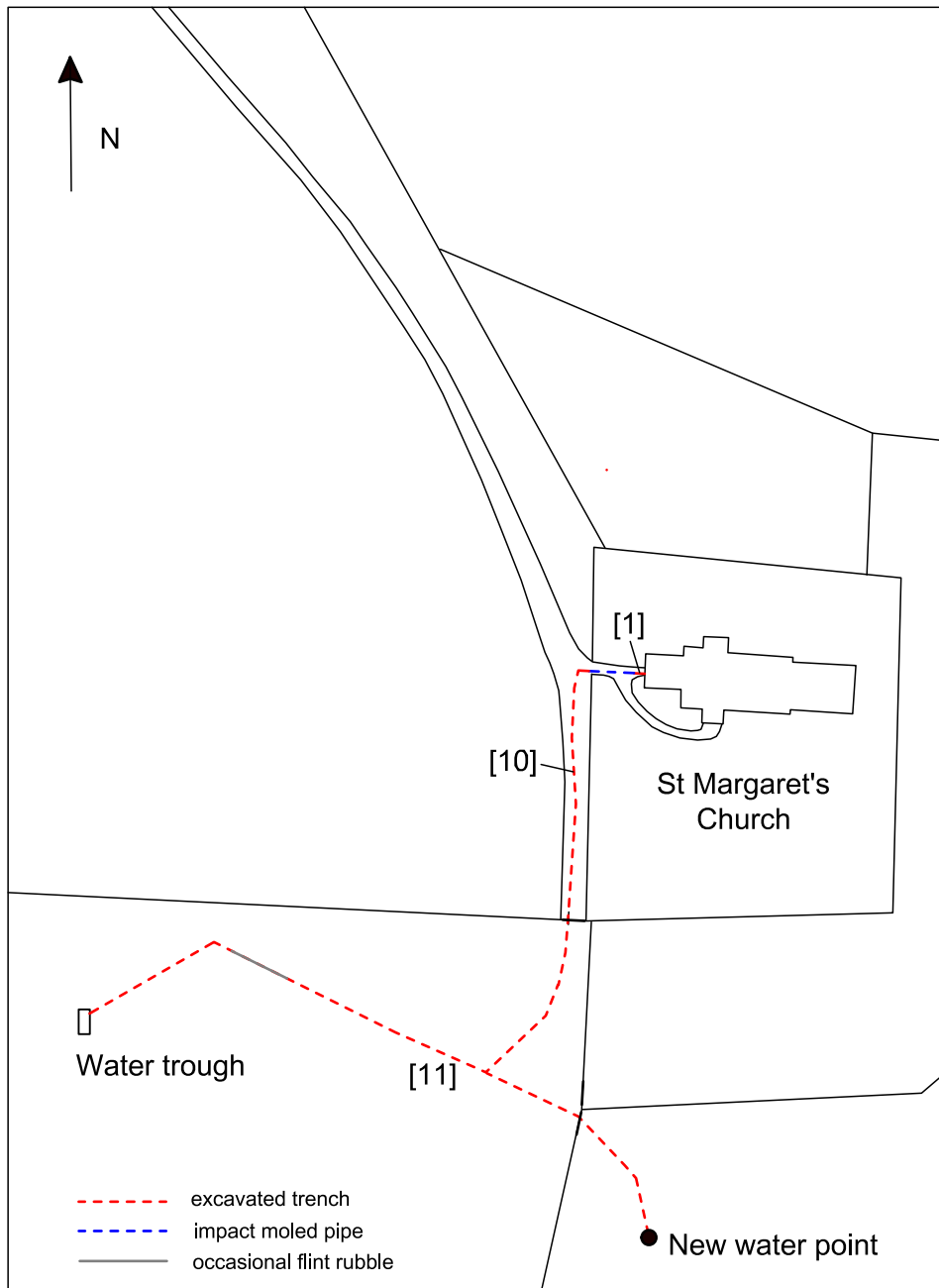


Figure 1: Location of work. Scale 1:1250

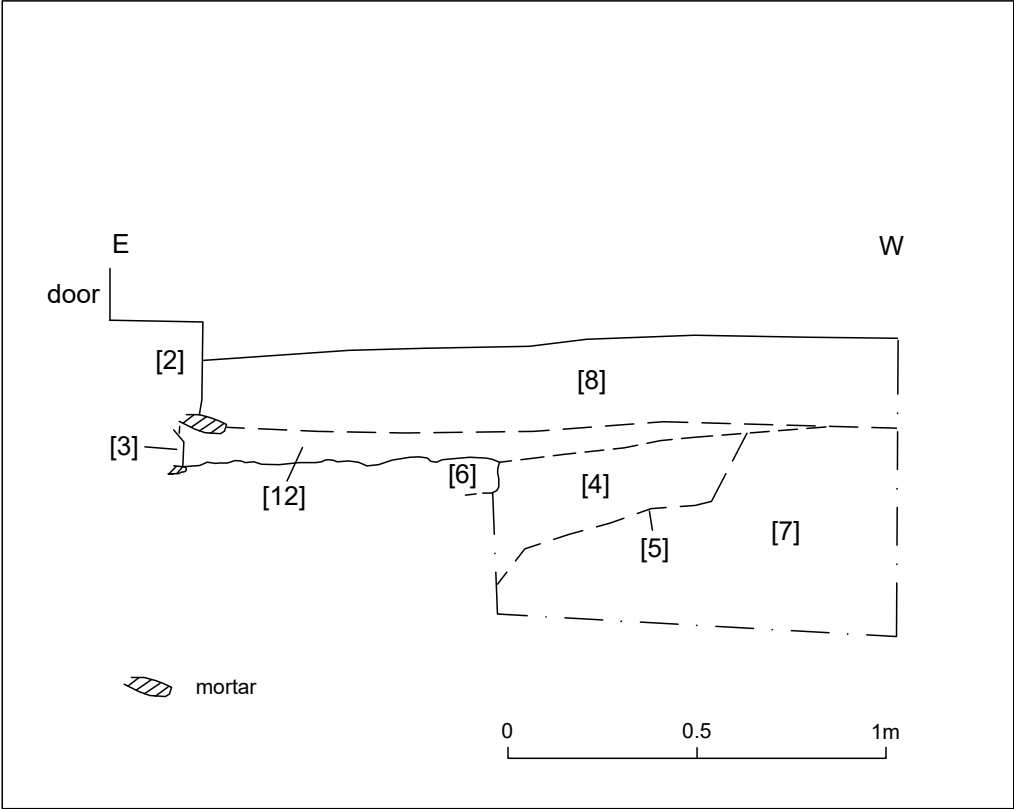


Figure 2: Trench 1; N-facing section. Scale 1:20



Plate 1: Trench 1; construction cut and fill [4]/[5], footing [6], looking S, 0.5m scale



Plate 2: Trench 1; footing [6] with base of door jamb exposed, looking ESE, 0.5m scale



Plate 3: Trench 1; detail of worked stone at base of jamb and below threshold, looking ESE, 0.2m scale



Plate 2: Trench 1; detail of worked stone at base of jamb, looking SE, 0.2m scale



Plate 5: Trench 10; looking S, 1m scale



Plate 6: Trench 11, looking N to field gate, 1m scale



Plate 7: Trench 11, looking ESE to field gates,
0.5m scale