



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An archaeological investigation
(test pitting) inside St Nicholas
Church, Frolesworth,
Leicestershire**

(SP 503 906)

Mathew Morris



ULAS Report No 2014-088

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**An archaeological investigation (test pitting)
inside St Nicholas Church, Frolesworth, Leicestershire**

(SP 503 906)

Mathew Morris

For: Frolesworth PCC

Approved by:

Signed:



Date: 18 May 2014

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An archaeological investigation (test pitting) inside St Nicholas Church, Frolesworth, Leicestershire (SP 503 906)

Mathew Morris

Summary

An archaeological investigation (test pitting) was carried out at St Nicholas Church, Frolesworth, Leicestershire (SP 503 906) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 8 May, 2014. Work was undertaken for Frolesworth PCC in order to provide indications of the character of deposits beneath the floor of the church in order to assist in determining the cause of localised subsidence. One c.0.8m x 0.8m test pit was hand-excavated in the church floor at the point where the north and south aisles crossed the nave. Beneath the floor tiles and concrete screed was a thick deposit of compacted hardcore, most likely laid down during the restoration of the church in the late 19th century. This covered a concreted ceramic pipe running into a brick heating duct to the north of the test pit. No evidence of subsidence in the substrata was found and the floor tiles appeared to be lifting up off the screed rather than settling down. No evidence of earlier church floors was found either although 19th century hardcore contained building rubble, possibly discarded church fabric. The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A68.2014.

Introduction

In May 2014 University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological investigation inside St Nicholas Church, Frolesworth, Leicestershire (SP 503 906 - Figure 1). The work was undertaken for Frolesworth PCC to provide indications of the character of deposits beneath the floor of the church in order to assist in determining the cause of localised subsidence. Work was carried out in accordance with a Faculty from the Diocese of Leicester to excavate a small test pit to investigate the substrata of the floor, provided that the work was carried out by an archaeological contractor. Archaeological work was carried out on 8 May, 2014 by staff of ULAS on behalf of Frolesworth PCC. This report presents the final results of the archaeological investigation.

Site Location, Geology and Topography

The village of Frolesworth is located approximately four miles north-west of Lutterworth and ten miles south-west of Leicester (Figure 1). The parish church of St Nicholas is a Grade II* listed building situated on the south side of Main Street between Nos. 31 and 33.

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet 169 (Coventry) shows that the underlying geology is likely to consist of superficial deposits of Wolston sand and gravel overlying bedrock deposits of Mercian mudstone (BGS 1994). The church lies on a ridge of high ground at c.113m aOD, land rising to the south-east but dropping away in all other directions.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Frolesworth has late Saxon origins, being recorded in the Domesday Book as Frellesworde. This is probably a derivation of the personal name Freothulaf and the Old English 'worth' meaning homestead, 'the settlement associated with Freothulaf' (Bourne 2003, 46).

The English Heritage listing for the parish church, dedicated to St Nicholas, describes it as 'partly early 13th century, with much of the later 13th century and 15th century. The tower was rebuilt in 1762. Conservative restoration in 1887-8.' This restoration is germane to the investigation. Albert Herbert writing about the church in 1922 notes that workmen removed the 'old brick floor' and raised the general level of the nave nine inches (23cm) in 1887-8 (Herbert 1922, 182).

Archaeological Objectives

The principle aims of the archaeological excavation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of archaeological deposits
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

All archaeological work will be considered in light of the following East Midlands Research Agenda and Strategy topics (Knight *et al.* 2012):

- **HIGH MEDIEVAL (1066-1485): Religion, 7.5.1.** Can we identify additional pre-Conquest church, minster and monastic sites? 7.5.4. Can we shed light on the distribution and development of early churches or chapels and the origins and growth of the parish system.

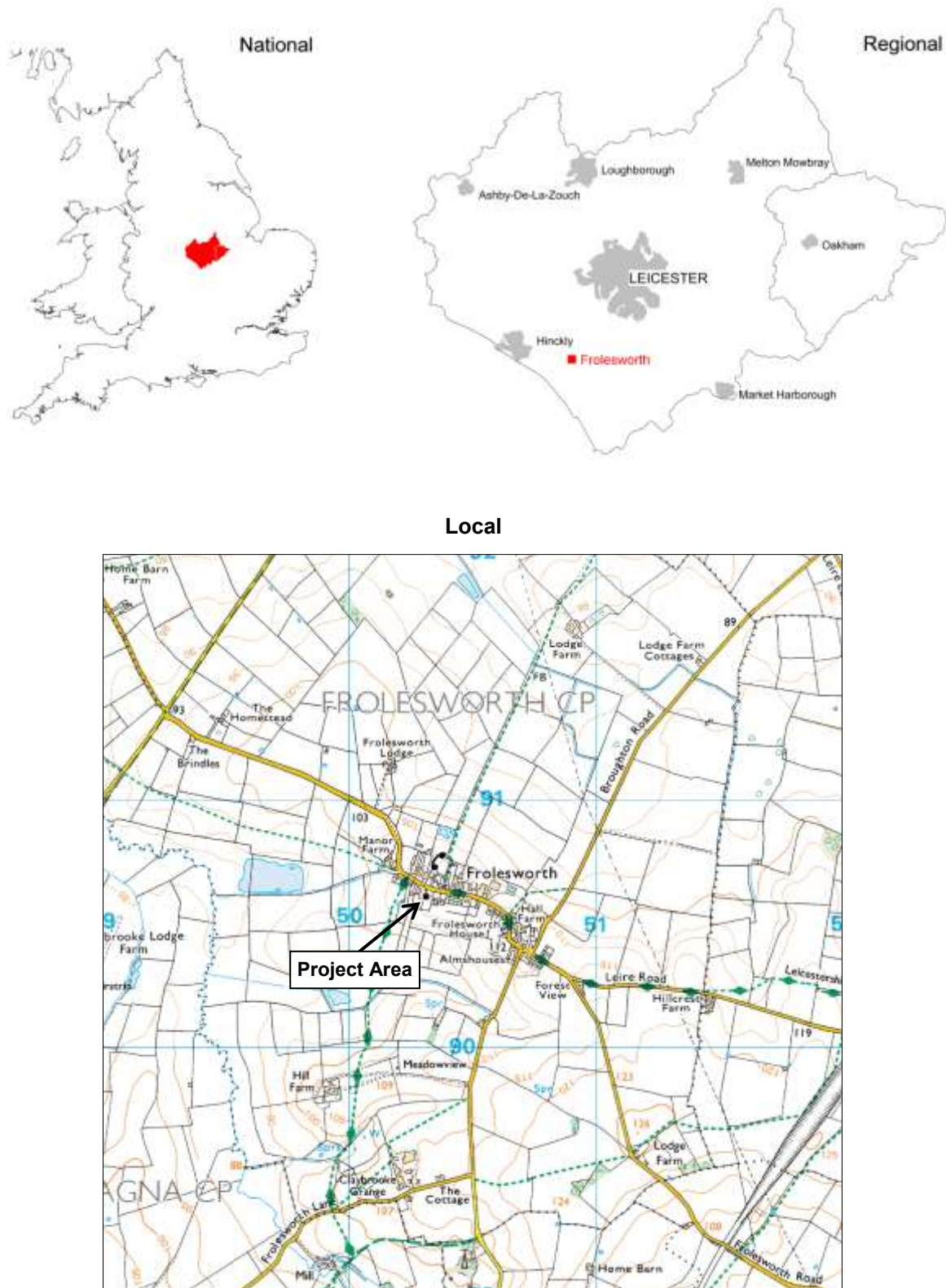


Figure 1: Location Plans with project area highlighted

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Methodology

The work proposed to hand-excavate a c.1m x 1m (maximum) square test pit in the church floor at the point where the north and south aisles crossed the nave (Figure 2). Existing floor tiles were removed by the church warden prior to work commencing. Substrata deposits were removed by hand in level spits under continuous archaeological supervision down to the uppermost archaeological deposits or the natural substratum, depending on which was reached first, or to a depth which would explain the cause of the localised subsidence.

Archaeological deposits encountered were recorded and excavated using standard procedures as outlined in the ULAS recording manual (Beamish 2007), as appropriate to the investigation. Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed was entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets where necessary. Field notes were recorded on pro-forma watching brief forms and plans/sections were drawn at appropriate scales and tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A photographic record of the excavation was prepared, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. Colour digital and 35mm black and white photographs were taken throughout the excavation. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

All work followed the approved written scheme of investigation (Kipling 2014) and the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (2008) and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LMARS).

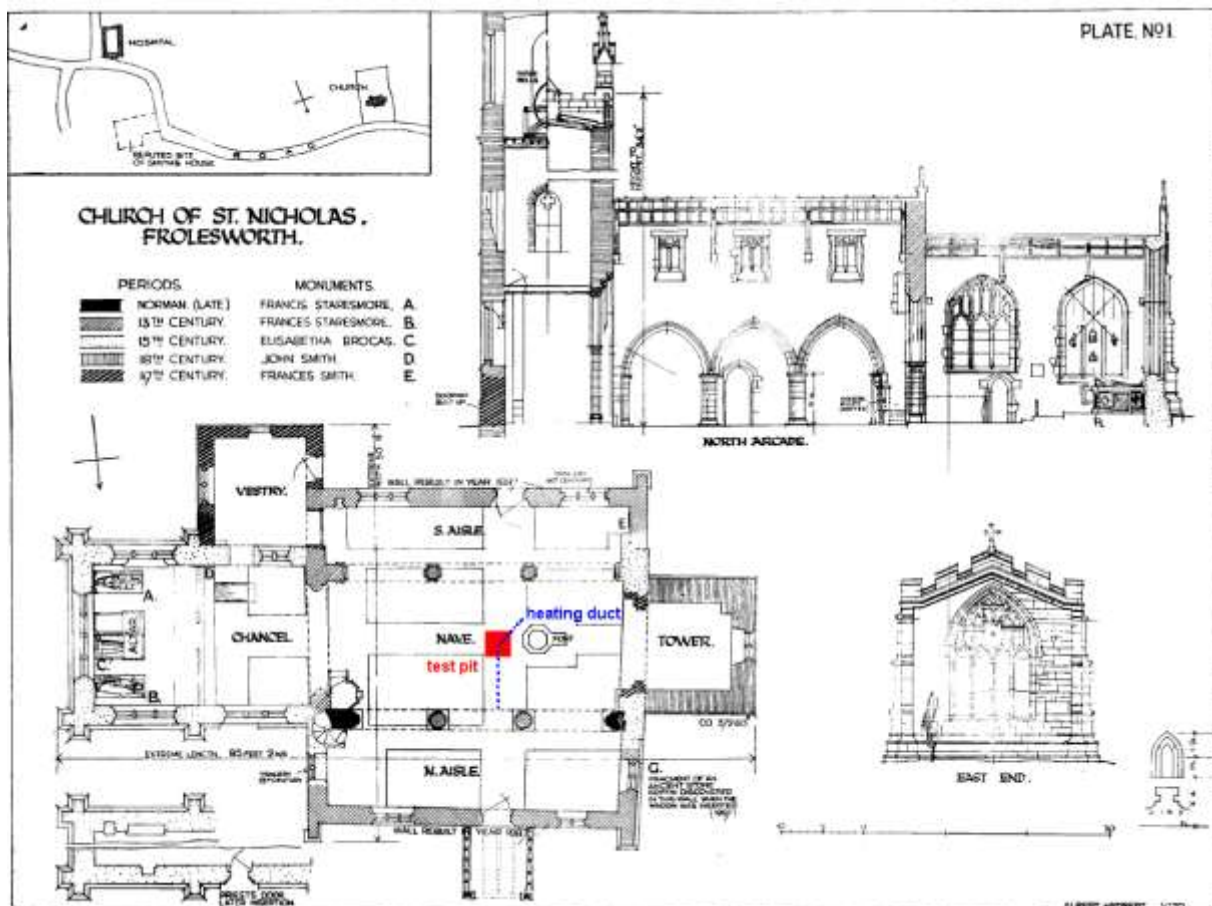


Figure 2: Plan of St Nicholas Church, showing test pit location.

Reproduced from Herbert 1922, Plate 1.

Results

Floor tiles were removed from an area measuring c.0.8m x 0.8m in the centre of the church nave, c.0.5m east of the font (Figure 2). This placed the test pit immediately south of a covered heating grate set into the church floor (Figure 3). The test pit was sited to investigate localised structural damage to the floor surrounding the grate and spreading away from it to the south.

Beneath the floor tiles was a c.10-20mm thick layer of concrete screed spread across a c.140mm thick layer of compacted yellowish-orange cement mixed with large quantities of crushed building rubble (stone, brick and

tile) and pebbles. Some stone fragments in this hardcore were faced and a few still bore a lime render suggesting that they most likely came from a building, perhaps the church itself. A fragment of floor tile found in the hardcore is of medieval date and may be part of the 'old brick floor' removed by workmen in 1887-8.

The hardcore covered a second layer of cement *c.*0.17m below present floor level. On the northern side of the trench, a 3mm thick iron plate was found between the screed and the hardcore. This projected *c.*0.1m into the test pit along its northern side and appeared to surround the heating grate to the north, providing a sill on which the grate rested. Beneath the plate, a void in the cement revealed a brick lined duct extending north beneath the heating grate (Figure 3), whilst the second layer of concrete in the test pit covered a large ceramic pipe which appeared to curve away to the south-west. The bottom of the duct/pipe was *c.*0.44m below floor level.



Figure 3: top, church nave looking west; bottom left, location of test pit in church floor; bottom right, test pit looking north, showing void into brick lined heating duct.

Discussion

The primary goal of the archaeological investigation was to establish a possible cause for localised structural damage to the floor in the church nave. No evidence of subsidence in the substrata was observed and the layers of hardcore and cement beneath the floor, presumably associated with the raising of the nave's floor during the restoration of the church in 1887-8, appeared compacted and stable. Of interest, building rubble mixed in with this hardcore appeared to be of medieval origin and was perhaps formerly church fabric which had been discarded during the restoration. No evidence of earlier church floors was found.

With the exception of the brick duct beneath the heating grate, the old underfloor heating appeared to be channelled beneath the floor in concreted ceramic pipes. One possible cause of the structural damage was damp getting between the floor tiles and concrete screed, or the screed and hardcore, and lifting the tiles up. Another cause may be the iron plate surrounding the heating grate. Corrosion may be causing it to expand, lifting the floor tiles.

Archive

The site archive consists of a watching brief record form, eight digital photographs, two monochrome photographs and a piece of medieval floor tile. The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A68.2014.

Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) at the University of York (see Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of OASIS information

Project OASIS no.	universi1-178561
Project Name	St Nicholas Church, Main Street, Frolesworth
Project Type	Single test pit
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Mathew Morris
Previous/Future work	None/unknown
Current Land Use	Religious building
Development Type	Repair to Listed Building
Reason for Investigation	
Position in the Planning Process	-
Site Co-ordinates	SP 503 906
Start/end dates of field work	07-05-2014
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museum Service
Study Area	0.64 sq m

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal, the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, in due course.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to the client, Frolesworth PCC, and in particular David Beeson, for their co-operation and assistance on site. Fieldwork was undertaken by Mathew Morris, the report was written by Mathew Morris and the project was managed for ULAS by Richard Buckley.

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