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CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, Stotfold, Beds.

HN1109

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

HERITAGE NETWORK

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CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN Stotfold, Bedfordshire

Project no.: HN1109
Accession no.: BEDFM 2013.63
LPA ref.: CB/13/01981/FULL

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Stotfold Parochial Church Council

By

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Report no. 863

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The cover photograph shows St Mary's Church, looking south

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Daniel Phillips and Helen Ashworth. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Daniel Phillips, and edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to: Helena Dean and Mike Dales, Michael Dales Partnership; Hannah Firth, Central Bedfordshire Council; David Baker, St Albans DAC; and, Bob Barnard, Lodge & Son, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	St Mary's Church, Stotfold, Beds.		
County:	Bedfordshire	District:	Central Bedfordshire
Village/town:	Stotfold	Parish:	Stotfold
Planning reference:	CB/13/01981/FULL	NGR:	TL 22044 36684
Client name and address:	Stotfold PCC, c/o Michael Dales Partnership, 95 Sharpenhoe Rd, Streatley, Luton, LU3 3PS		
Nature of work:	New disabled access	Existing land use:	Church & churchyard
Site status:	Listed Building	Reason for investigation:	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in planning process:	After full determination	Project brief originator:	None
Size of affected area:	c.103m ²	Size of area investigated:	c.103m ²
Site Code:	HN1109	Museum accession no:	BEDFM 2013.63
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc.:	Monitoring	Archive recipient:	Bedford Museum
Start of work	17/03/2014	Finish of work	07/05/2014
Related HER Nos:	1132 (church); 8972 (churchyard)	Periods represented:	Medieval; Post-medieval
Oasis UID	heritage1-166712	Significant finds:	None
Monument types:	Church, churchyard		
Physical archive:	None		
Previous summaries/reports:	Ashworth, H. 2013 <i>Church of St Mary the Virgin, Stotfold, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Monitoring Report</i> , Heritage Network report no.782		

Synopsis:

In response to an archaeological condition on the planning consent for the provision of new disabled access to the north aisle at St. Mary's Church, Stotfold, Bedfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Stotfold PCC to monitor the groundworks. The work involved the lowering of the threshold to the existing doorway and general reduction of both the exterior and interior levels.

It was considered that the present investigation could have the opportunity to expand the understanding of the origins and development of the Saxon and medieval settlement at Stotfold and the origins and development of St Mary's church.

The ground reduction on the exterior revealed a graveyard soil with no significant archaeological features, deposits or finds. However, the excavation did demonstrate that the north aisle wall had been underpinned in the recent past with the addition of a chamfered concrete string course and two courses of Arleseley white bricks. When the threshold to the existing doorway was lowered, similar underpinning to the York Stone entrance steps was revealed and the remains of an earlier threshold.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of the Michael Dales Partnership, acting on behalf of Stotfold Parochial Church Council, as part of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording of works to create a new disabled access in the north aisle entrance at St Mary's Church, Stotfold, Bedfordshire.

1.2 Planning permission for the development (ref: CB/13/01981/FULL), granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), has been subject to an archaeological condition issued in line with the Department of Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). Condition 4 of the planning consent states that:

No development shall commence until such time as a written scheme of archaeological investigation, that shall include post excavation analysis and publication, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall only be carried out in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme.

Reason: To record and advance understanding of the heritage assets with archaeological interest which will be unavoidably affected as a consequence of the development (Policy DM13 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2009.

1.3 In line with the condition, and in line with current professional practice as defined in the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* published by English Heritage, and *Standard and Guidance* documents published by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO), the programme of work on the present site includes field investigation and mitigation, together with analysis and report preparation, leading to the publication of the findings and the deposition of the project archive with an approved repository.

1.4 St Mary's Church lies at the eastern end of the modern village, within the medieval core of Stotfold. The study area, centred on NGR TL 22044 36684, is located around the north door to the church and within the churchyard to the north (Figure 1).

1.5 The current proposals are a continuation of works to improve the facilities within the church. Previous works include the provision of toilet facilities and a kitchenette in the base of the west tower. The archaeological monitoring of these works in late 2012 / early 2013 were carried out by the Heritage Network under a diocesan faculty (Ashworth 2013).

1.6 The present development proposes the removal of the internal lobby behind the north door and the lowering of the threshold, together with the reduction of the ground outside, to create a level access into the church. The proposed works include threshold drainage, feeding to a soakaway within the churchyard.

2. Fieldwork

SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 St Mary's Church lies at the eastern end of the modern village, within the medieval core of Stotfold. The site lies on level ground within the valley of the River Ivel, at approximately 45m AOD.

2.2 Locally the soils belong to the Wantage 2 Association (342d), described as 'Shallow well drained calcareous silty soils over chalk' (SSEW 1983).

2.3 The underlying geology consists of chalk of the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation, overlain by glaciofluvial deposits of sand and gravel, formed up to 2 million years ago (www.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/viewer.html).

METHODOLOGY

2.4 The timetable for the fieldwork followed the client's groundwork schedule. A number of site visits were made to record the exposed surfaces and walls within the church and to supervise the excavation of the service trenches.

2.5 The groundworks were undertaken using both hand excavation and machining with a 1.5 ton, 360-degree tracked mini digger fitted with a 0.9m toothless ditching bucket.

2.6 All human remains were rapidly assessed on site. As the remains were disarticulated and did not represent a statistically significant sample of the population, it was decided that there was no justification for detailed off-site study and the bones were set aside for reburial by the vicar.

MONITORING AND RECORDING

2.7 The present monitoring programme at St Mary's Church, covered the creation of a new disabled access to the north aisle entrance (Plate 1 & 14). This entailed a general ground reduction both internal and external to a new threshold. Part of the internal lobby was removed, the doorway lowered, the approaching two footpaths lowered and an overall external ground reduction to the new level. Excavation for a new drain was also undertaken.

External ground reduction

2.8 The ground immediately in front of the existing doorway was reduced by 0.5m below the existing surface. The excavated area had a semi-circular plan to accommodate a new, York stone paved entrance (Plate 2). It measured 2.5m in width and 5m in length. Either side of this, along the outside wall of the north aisle, the ground was also reduced by 0.5m. These two areas were both 0.9m wide and the combined excavated length was 10m.

2.9 The stratigraphy consisted of a 0.15m thick layer of loose dark brown (10YR 3/3) silty clay with moderate small sub rounded pebble inclusions, interpreted as a graveyard soil. This overlay a 0.35m thick layer of friable yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) silty clay with frequent small sub rounded flint, mortar, brick and tile inclusions.

2.10 The foundation of the north aisle wall was revealed below the existing surface, consisting of a chamfered stringcourse formed in modern concrete above flint rubble, 0.18m deep. Below this were two courses of Arlesey white brick underpinning (Plate 3). The upper

was a row of headers (0.11m x 0.07m). The lower course was a row of headers (0.11m x 0.07m) and stretchers (0.22m x 0.07m) (Plate 4).

2.11 Within the excavated area a modern gas main was exposed as well as an existing ceramic rainwater drain. To allow this to be reused (rather than a new drain and soakaway being created, as originally proposed) the ground level required lowering by a further 0.25m. To achieve this a 0.3m wide trench was dug on the same line, running parallel with the north aisle wall (Plate 5). The stratigraphy revealed a continuation of the previously observed friable yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) silty clay.

2.12 The two existing footpaths leading to the north aisle entrance were also reduced to the level of the new threshold (Plate 6). The excavated area for the eastern path (Plate 7) measured 3.3m in length and 1.1m wide. The excavated area for the western path (Plate 8) measured 5.6m in length and 1.4m wide.

2.13 Following the removal of the existing concrete slab, each footpath was graded from 0.15m at their northern ends, to 0.3m where they connected with apron in front of the door. The stratigraphy below the concrete slabs consisted of a mixed levelling layer of hardcore and sand. This overlay the loose dark brown (10YR 3/3) silty clay graveyard soil.

2.14 In addition, the entire grassed area around the north aisle entrance was reduced and graded to match the new footpaths and doorway (Plate 13). The excavation revealed the loose dark brown (10YR 3/3) silty clay graveyard soil observed across site.

2.15 No significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were revealed during the external ground reduction.

Internal ground reduction

2.16 In order to accommodate the new lowered threshold, the internal floor level within the lobby and the existing doorway needed to be lowered.

2.17 The work on the doorway involved the removal of the lower portions of the existing stone door frame and their replacement with new stonework (Plate 9). The existing York stone steps in the entrance were also removed.

2.18 Once the first and upper step had been removed a second lower step was discovered, also in York stone (Figure 3 & 4). It measured 1.5m in length, 0.3m in width and 0.15m in thickness and was worn in the middle. It was lying on top of post-medieval red brick and tile fragments (Plate 10), which also included Arlesey white brick similar to that observed in the underpinning of the north aisle wall.

2.19 During this stage of work, a stone block was revealed at the east end of the exposed doorway, below the current ground level and within the wall fabric (Figure 3 & 4, Plate 11). It appeared to be square in shape with straight, smooth edges, and was overlain by the east end of the previously recorded lower step (Plate 12). It may mark the end of an earlier threshold to the doorway.

2.20 No other significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were revealed during the internal ground reduction.

3. Discussion

Historical and Archaeological Setting

3.1 The core of the modern village of Stotfold is located along Arlesey Road, to the south of the church. The church lies at the eastern end of the parish and is likely to have formed part of the manorial complex with Stotfold Bury to the north-east.

3.2 Little evidence for early occupation has been recorded from the immediate vicinity of the church. Pre-medieval finds include a Palaeolithic handaxe (HER 14677), found to the east of the village, and Roman pottery (HER 11327) at Bury Farm, less than 200m to the north-east.

3.3 Stotfold is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as forming part of the holdings of Hugh of Beauchamp (Morris 1977). The manor was relatively large and wealthy, answering for 15 hides (approximately 1,800 acres) and worth £25.00 at that time. Forty one households are recorded on the manor, giving an estimated total population of between 160 and 200. The property also had 4 mills, valued at £4 and produced 400 eels from the River Ivel. The river meadows were sufficient to pasture 7 plough teams, half the number employed on the manor. One of the hides (approximately 120 acres) belonged to St Albans Abbey and had done so before 1066. The Domesday entry indicates a thriving settlement that had been in existence since at least the late Saxon period.

3.4 The present church (HER 1132) is a Grade II* listed building (List entry no. 1113866) (www.heritagegateway.org.uk). The building has 12th century origins, probably as an aisle-less nave and chancel, but may have had an earlier wooden precursor given that a Saxon coffin, containing a human skeleton, was discovered in the nave during restoration work in 1890 (www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk/History.htm). The church was granted to Chicksands Priory by Simon de Beauchamp, the founder of the Priory, in c.1150 (ibid).

3.5 Various stages of work were undertaken in the 13th – 15th centuries, with the addition of the north and south aisles, the south porch and the west tower. The nave and chancel were also reworked in the 14th and 15th centuries.

3.6 The west tower is of 15th century date and consists of three stages, with four-stage angle buttresses (www.heritagegateway.org.uk). The west elevation of the ground stage has a pointed arch doorway under a square head, surmounted by a 3-light 2 centre-headed window. The bell-stage has paired 2-light pointed-arched windows to each side.

Collected Data

3.7 Monitoring of the external groundworks for a new disabled access to the north aisle entrance revealed 0.15m of loose dark brown silty clay graveyard soil overlying a 0.35m thick layer of friable yellowish brown silty clay.

3.8 The works also revealed the foundation of the north aisle below the existing ground surface, consisting of a chamfered stringcourse formed in modern concrete above a course of flint rubble which overlay two courses of Arlesey white bricks.

3.9 The lowering of the north aisle doorway and the removal of parts of the stone door frame revealed a heavily worn York stone step bedded on a levelling layer of compacted red brick, tiles and Arleseey white brick.

3.10 Within the wall fabric at the east end of the doorway a square stone block, possibly part of an earlier threshold with straight, smooth sides was revealed.

Conclusions

3.11 It was considered that the present investigation could have the opportunity to expand the understanding of:

- the origins and development of the Saxon and medieval settlement at Stotfold;
- the origins and development of St Mary's church.

3.12 The ground reduction to the existing paths and grassed area on the exterior of the north aisle revealed graveyard soil with no significant archaeological features, deposits or finds. The foundations of the north aisle wall were exposed, however, and were shown to have been underpinned with Arleseey white brick and repaired with a chamfered string course in concrete. This modern underpinning extended the length of the exposed section.

3.13 Similar underpinning was noted below a hidden York stone slab within the entrance.

3.14 A York stone block at the base of the east end of the doorway may represent part of an earlier threshold.

3.15 No archaeological features or deposits earlier than the medieval period were revealed during the course of the present project.

Confidence Rating

3.16 In the course of the fieldwork, weather and ground conditions were acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. There were no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the work which was less than *High*.

4. Schedule of site visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
17/03/2014	DRP	2	Pre start visit and photographs taken
19/03/2014	HMA	2	Monitor ground reduction around doorway and along north aisle outer wall. Exposed features were recorded.
20/03/2014	DRP	2	Photographs and recording on exposed ground reduction.
24/03/2014	DRP	1	Monitor ground reduction around doorway and along north aisle outer wall to accommodate a service. Exposed features were recorded.
01/04/2014	DRP	2	Monitor ground reduction on footpaths leading to the doorway. Exposed features were recorded.
03/04/2014	DRP	2	Monitor and recorded exposed doorway step.
06/05/2014	RGD	5	Monitor general ground reduction around entrance
07/05/2014	RGD	2	Monitor general ground reduction around entrance

5. Bibliography

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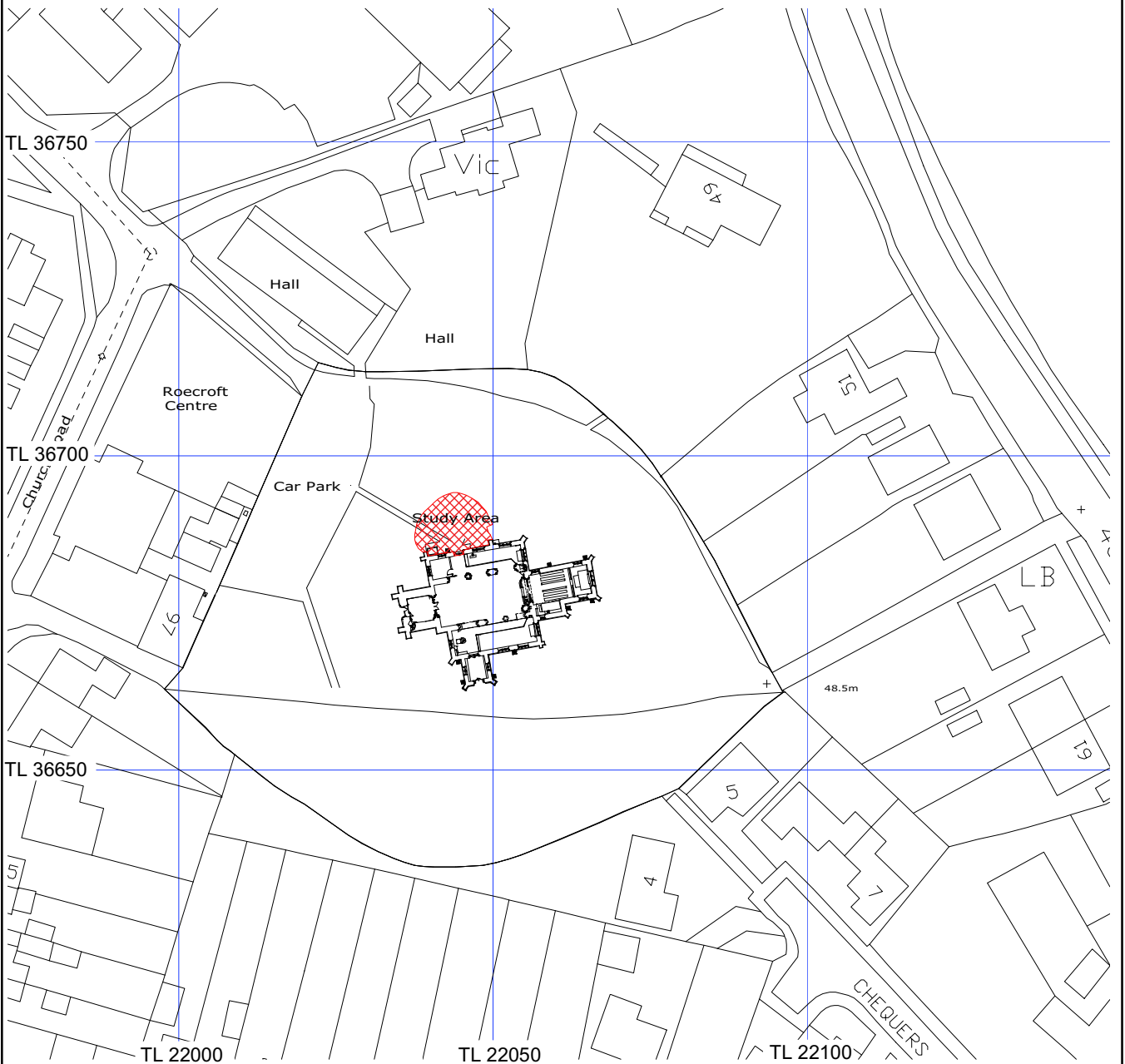
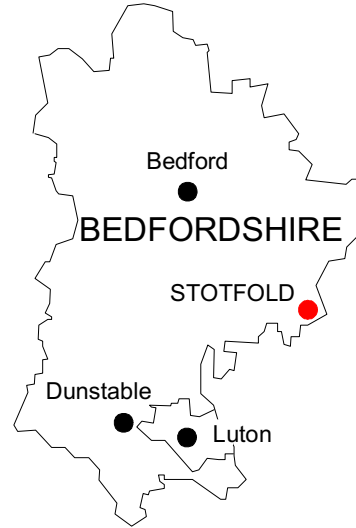
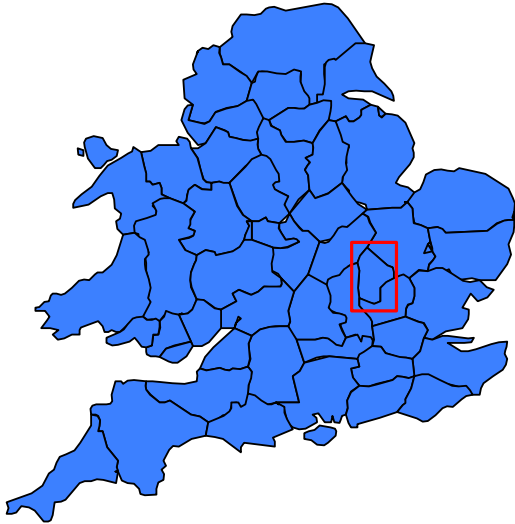
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Victoria County History www.british-history.ac.uk: 'Parishes: Stotfold', *A History of the County of Bedford: volume 2* (1908), pp. 300-304. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=62652>. Date accessed: 02 January 2013

6. Illustrations

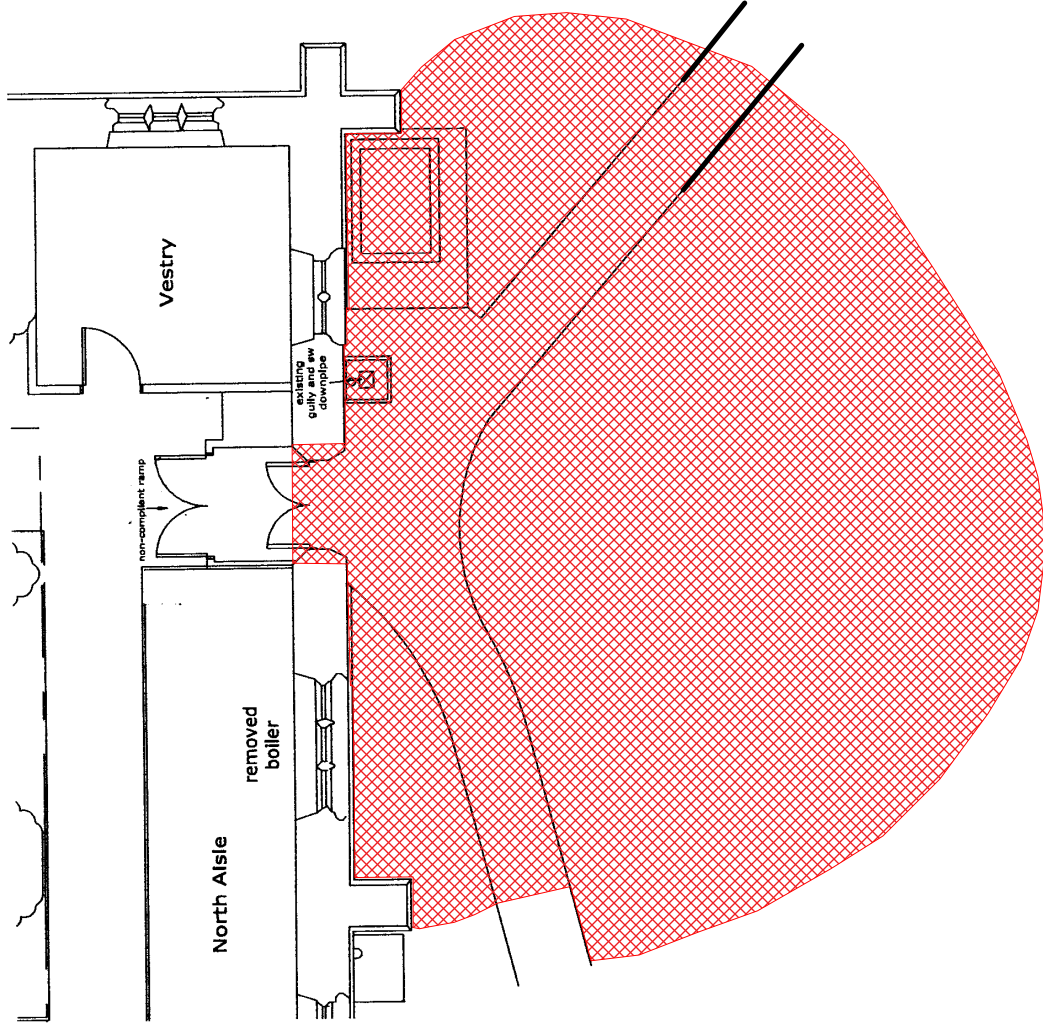
Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	Site layout
Figure 3	Section of church doorway
Figure 4	Plan of excavated church doorway
Plate 1	Pre-excavation, north door, looking S
Plate 2	External ground reduction, looking SE
Plate 3	Exposed underpinning to north aisle wall, looking S
Plate 4	North aisle underpinning showing Arlesey white bricks
Plate 5	Lowering of existing drain, looking SW
Plate 6	Footpath reduction, looking NW
Plate 7	Eastern path, as reduced, looking N
Plate 8	Western path, as reduced, looking SE
Plate 9	North doorway, looking S
Plate 10	York stone step, showing underpinning material, looking S
Plate 11	Exposed York stone block, looking SE
Plate 12	Exposed York stone block, looking S
Plate 13	Grading of grassed area around entrance, looking E
Plate 14	New north doorway, looking S

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Site Location

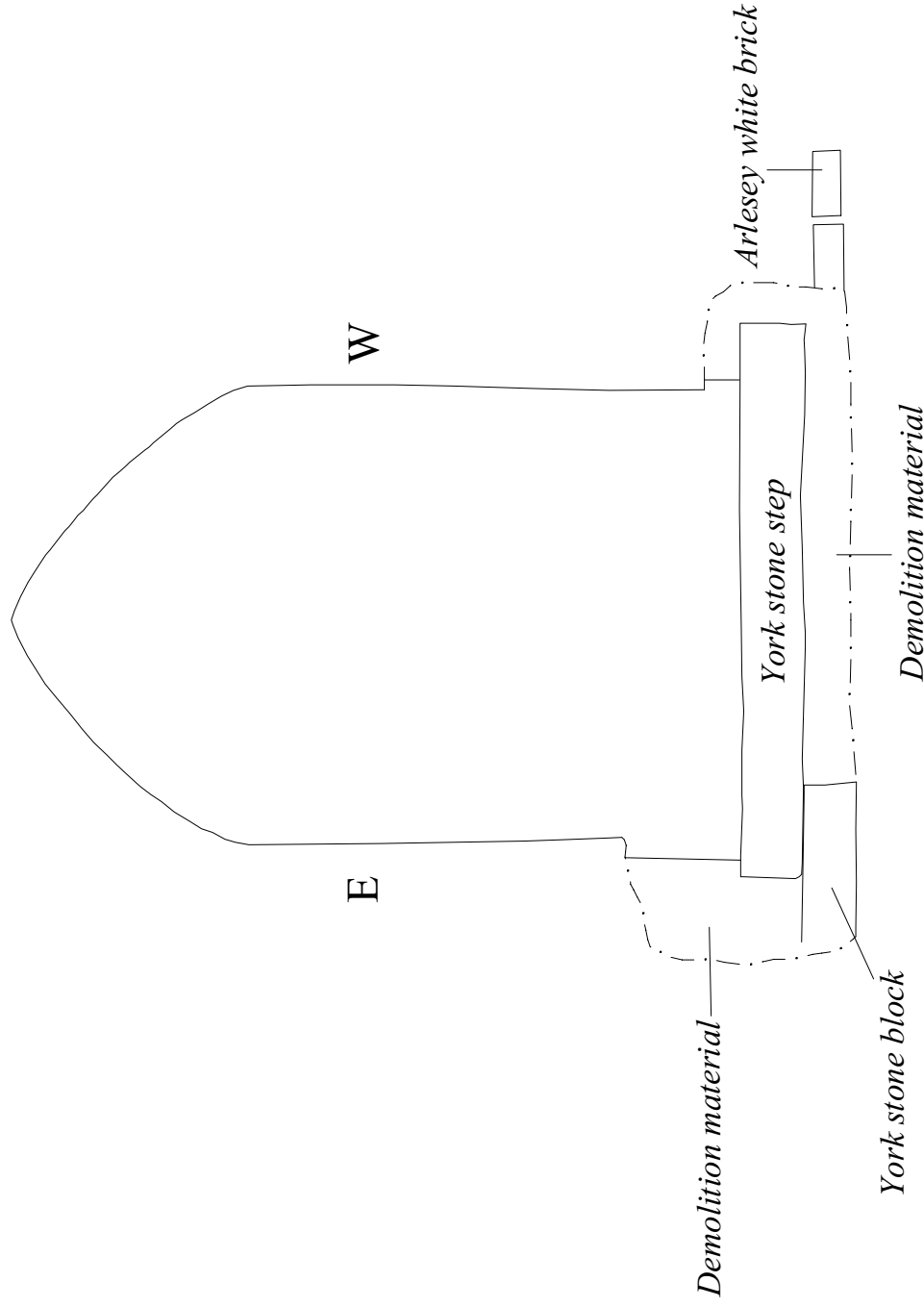
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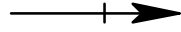
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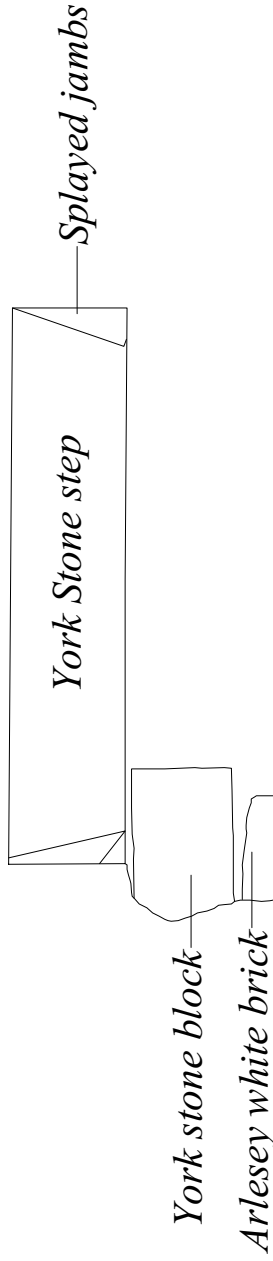
North Aisle Doorway



Section of church doorway.



North Aisle Interior



External excavated area

0 0.5m



Plate 1: Pre-Excavation. North door, looking south



Plate 2: External ground reduction, looking south-east



Plate 3: Exposed underpinning to north aisle wall, looking south



Plate 4: North aisle underpinning, showing Arleseey white bricks



Plate 5: Lowering of existing drain, looking south-west



Plate 6: Footpath reduction, looking north-west



Plate 7: Eastern path, as reduced, looking north



Plate 8: Western path, as reduced, looking south-east



Plate 9: North doorway, looking south



Plate 10: York stone step, showing underpinning material, looking south



Plate 11: Exposed York stone block, looking south-east



Plate 12: Exposed York stone block, looking south



Plate 13: Grading of grassed area around entrance, looking east



Plate 14: New north doorway, looking south

Appendix

OASIS data entry form

OASIS ID: heritage1-166712	
Project details	
Project name	Stotfold, St. Mary's Church, Church Road
Short description of the project	<p>In response to an archaeological condition on the planning consent for the provision of new disabled access to the north aisle at St. Mary's Church, Stotfold, Bedfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Stotfold PCC to monitor the groundworks. The work involved the lowering of the threshold to the existing doorway and general reduction of both the exterior and interior levels.</p> <p>It was considered that the present investigation could have the opportunity to expand the understanding of the origins and development of the Saxon and medieval settlement at Stotfold and the origins and development of St Mary's church.</p> <p>The ground reduction on the exterior revealed a graveyard soil with no significant archaeological features, deposits or finds. However, the excavation did demonstrate that the north aisle wall had been underpinned in the recent past with the addition of a chamfered concrete string course and two courses of Arlesey white bricks. When the threshold to the existing doorway was lowered, similar underpinning to the York Stone entrance steps was revealed and the remains of an earlier threshold.</p>
Project dates	Start: 17-03-2014 End: 07-05-2014
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Associated project reference codes	HN1109 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Site status (other)	Churchyard
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	CHURCH Medieval
Monument type	CHURCHYARD Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE MID BEDFORDSHIRE STOTFOLD St. Mary's Church, Church Road
Postcode	SG5 4NE
Study area	103.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 22030 36676 52.0146392114 -0.221625857444 52 00 52 N 000 13 17 W Point
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Heritage Network
Project brief originator	None
Project design originator	Helen Ashworth
Project director	David Hillelson
Project supervisor	Daniel Phillips
Sponsor/funding body	PCC

Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Bedford Museum
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Bedford Museum
Paper Media available	"Diary", "Drawing", "Photograph", "Report"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN Stotfold, Bedfordshire
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Phillips, D.
Other bibliographic details	Report No 863
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	Heritage Network
Place of issue or publication	Letchworth Garden City
Description	A4 booklet green cover comb bound 10 Text pages, 4 Figures, 14 Plates