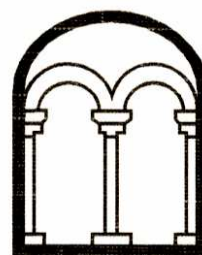


**ST MARY'S CHURCH
FELMERSHAM
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Albion
archaeology



**ST MARY'S CHURCH
FELMERSHAM
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

The project was commissioned by The Victor Farrar Partnership on behalf of the PCC.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Mark Phillips (Project Officer). This report has been prepared by Mark Phillips. All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

The assistance of Ken Shrimpton of the PCC and Tom Seamark is gratefully acknowledged.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background*

The parish church of St Mary the Virgin in Felmersham stands on the north side of the village, in a raised location overlooking the river Great Ouse. For a medieval village church the one at Felmersham is large with a cruciform plan, central crossing tower and elaborate west front. It dates mainly from around 1220–1240. Alterations undertaken during the medieval period include rebuilding the wall of the south aisle (14th century), addition of a clerestory (15th century) and heightening the tower (VCH 1912, 59–63, Pevsner 2002, 89–90). Repairs to the west front, tower parapet and roofs were carried out in the early 19th century and restoration works were undertaken in the 1850s and 1860s (Pickford 1994, 289–90).

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring during the removal of pews in the nave prior to the construction of a new vestry screen at the west end of the north aisle. A requirement for an archaeological watching brief was recommended by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA). Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the Victor Farrar Partnership on behalf of the Parochial Church Council to undertake the archaeological works.

1.2 *Methodology*

The building works involved the removal of pews and their replacement with new flagstone flooring. Discussions between the architect and the DAA concluded that significant ground reduction prior to the installation of the flagstones was unlikely to be necessary, due to the presence of an existing void below the pews. It was anticipated that the required make-up for the new floor would be installed in this existing void.

The DAA advised that an archaeological contractor should assess the works following the removal of the pews. If no significant ground reduction was required, then a short report to this effect would be needed to satisfy the proviso on the faculty. In the event that significant ground reduction was required, the DAA advised that further archaeological monitoring would be necessary.

Following the removal of the pews at the west end of the nave Albion Archaeology visited the site on 7th January 2015 to assess the works. The location of the opening in the floor was measured and photographed. A section of the exposed material beneath the former pew base was cleaned and examined.



2. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

2.1 *Description*

The opened-up area of floor was located close to the west end of the nave, on its northern side next to the north aisle (Figure 1). The slightly raised, wooden base for the pews had been removed in this area to uncover the underlying floor void. No additional ground reduction had been undertaken by the building contractors. The opening had maximum dimensions of 2.7m east-west, 2.8m north-south and 150mm deep beneath the surrounding flagstone floor.

The base of the void was covered in a layer of dusty debris with loose fragments of limestone. The majority of the limestone consisted of small, irregular-shaped fragments spread across the surface. A line of larger, irregular-shaped slabs of limestone formed a north-south aligned row — they had presumably been arranged to support a timber joist in the pew base. To the west of these larger stones, the surface was examined by trowelling. The material consisted of fine dust and limestone debris. Debris on the surface of the layer comprised limestone fragments, a fragment of window glass and a fragment of lead window came, all of which were left on site. The window glass consisted of slightly greenish, plain glass. No examples of painted window glass were identified.

2.2 *Discussion and Conclusions*

The material uncovered beneath the floor comprised building debris, consisting mostly of small fragments of limestone waste. It is likely to have been deposited during the restoration of the church in the mid-19th century. The current pew bases were probably installed when the nave was re-seated. This was done during the first phase of the restoration works which were carried out in 1857–1858 (Pickford 1994, 290).

The results of the investigation and information from the architects on the nature of the planned works indicate that the works will have no significant impact on sub-surface archaeological deposits. Any surviving archaeological layers are sealed beneath a layer of limestone building waste which was probably deposited during the restoration of the church in the mid-19th century. Monitoring during the construction works is unlikely to uncover any useful data on the earlier development of the building.

The results of the investigation are fully presented with this report, which will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (OASIS ID no. albionar1-201089).



3. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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4. FIGURES

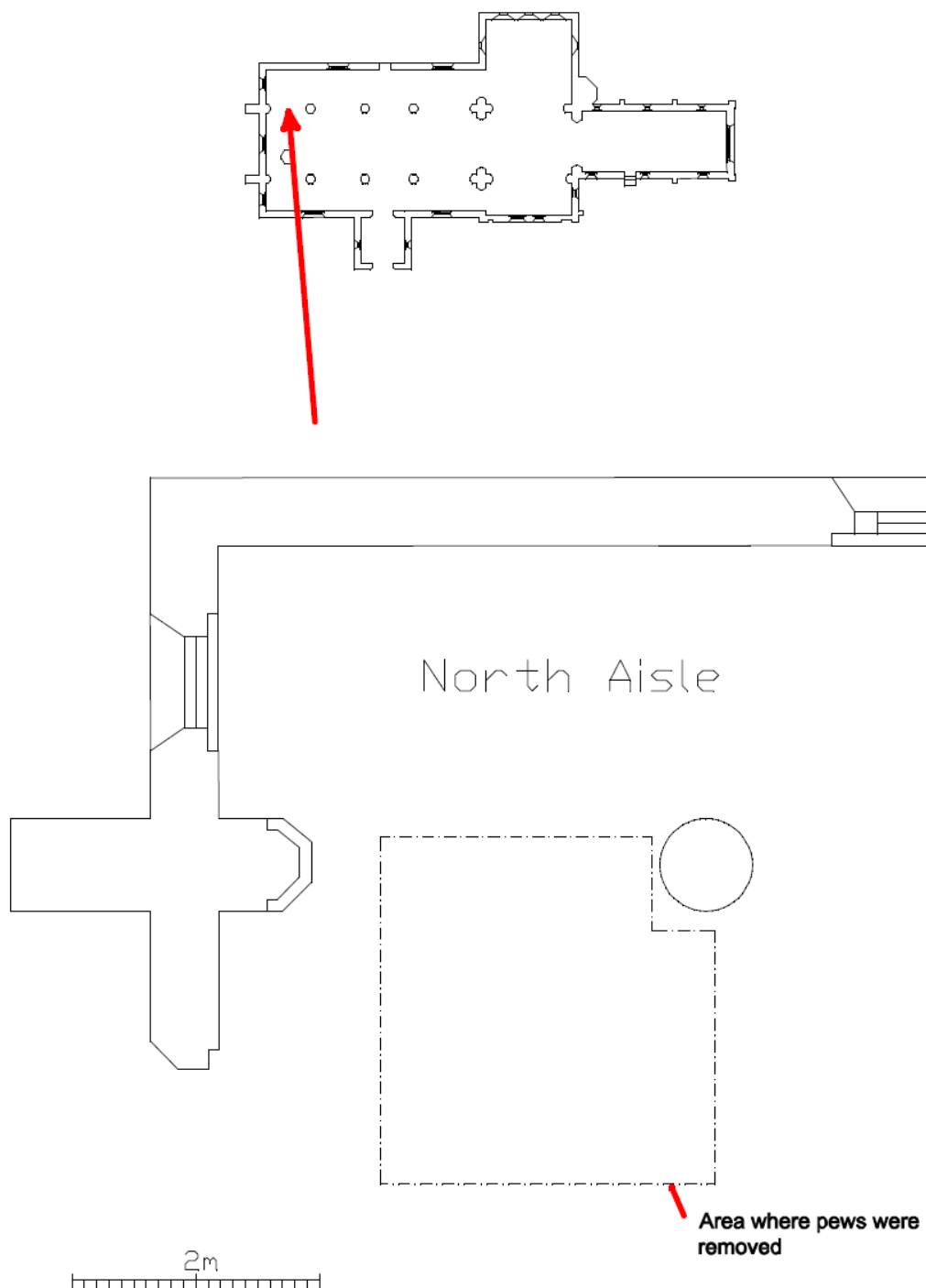


Figure 1: Plan of area of observations



Figure 2: Image showing location of works

Looking north showing location of removed pew base with the west door to the left and the north aisle to the rear



Figure 3: Image showing void beneath removed pew base

Looking east showing line of large limestone fragments and limestone rubble spread (scale 1m)

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