

Further Information

St Mary's Church, Ashwell: Memorial Plaque for unmarked vault under the North Aisle - DAC case ref 050110-0920B

On 20th July 2021, all thirteen members of the PCC attended the PCC meeting. They voted unanimously to apply for a faculty to install a wall mounted stone memorial plaque on the wall in the north aisle to commemorate the unknown parishioners interred in the barrel vault and those whose remains were disturbed and removed during the excavations for the new facilities. The remains will be re-interred in the churchyard later.

We ask that it is noted that the entire PCC was in attendance and the vote was unanimous. This reflects strong views by parishioners.

The PCC is aware that the Standing Committee had concerns about a stone plaque being fixed to a mediaeval column and therefore consideration has been given to other appropriate locations for the stone. I attach photographs of the wall where it is proposed that the wall mounted stone memorial plaque should be placed.

I also attach photographs of the position where it is proposed the floor slab with the incised cross should be placed.

An interpretation panel will also be mounted on the new electrical cupboard door describing the barrel vault with pictures and archaeological notes. I attach a photo of this location as well.

The PCC have noted the observations of several members of the Standing Committee that barrel vaults are common. The view of the PCC and the wider church community in Ashwell is that whilst barrel vaults may be common in churchyards, (and in fact St Mary's Ashwell has one that collapsed under a box memorial in the churchyard several years ago), they are much rarer within a parish church itself. The discovery of one in our church is literally once in a lifetime event. After its discovery, we had over 200 visitors to see the vault and talk about the finds, all socially distancing in the pandemic last summer. Without exception visitors wanted to hear more and expected that we would be able to mark the discovery of the vault and the many other individuals buried in that spot. By any measure, this is a significant archaeological discovery beneath a church floor and the PCC was unanimous in agreeing that it needs permanently recording.

The proposed work will be funded by an individual and we are not asking for any financial support. We are backed by our congregation and wider community in this Faculty application.