

## St Mary de Haura. New Shoreham, Sussex Repair of the Choir Vault



The Church of St Mary de Haura dates from 1103. In Romanesque and Transitional styles, it can justifiably be regarded as one of the most beautiful and architecturally important churches in Sussex. A particular feature of the church is the early choir vault, with Caen stone ribs and plastered chalk webs.

In 1991 the choir vault was limewashed. It soon became apparent that the limewash was not adhering to the vault. Investigation revealed that the principal reason was the extremely high level of sea salt in the vault masonry.

A ground penetrating radar survey was commissioned to ascertain the thickness and condition of the vault. It was finally agreed that the webs should be replaced and the ribs retained and repaired. It was agreed that the first phase of work would be to the west bay.

CWO started with the erection of an internal scaffolding platform to enable church services to carry on beneath.

**Client:** St. Mary De Haura Church  
**Main Contractor:** CWO Ltd  
**Architect:** Carden & Godfrey  
**Quantity Surveyor:** Babbie Murdock Green  
**Consultant Engineers:** Price Myres  
**Value:** £130,000

Poulticing of the exposed sides of the Caen stone ribs was followed by the erection of timber shuttering. Demolition confirmed the poor condition of the masonry. New chalk was obtained from Duncton quarry near Petworth, and sawn into blocks. These were sized to be lifted into the roof space and placed with the minimum of on-site dressing.

The technology of today was used and the work proceeded with machine sawn blocks, in the knowledge that the chalk surface would be dressed by hand once the timber centring was removed.

CWO made a start at the vault springing, and immediately the impracticality of filling in these tapering spaces with large squared blocks with the ribs in place was apparent. The work could only be achieved by a man lying upside down on the timber framework aided by a colleague outside the vault at the lower level.

On removal of the timber centring the chalk was dressed to an even shape, and pointed in mortar to match the colour of the chalk.

The contract was completed March 2003



**RESTORATION**