

***An Archaeological Watching Brief at
St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury,
2009***

by
H R Hannaford

Archaeology Service



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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
ST ALKMUND'S CHURCH, SHREWSBURY, 2009

by
H R HANNAFORD MIFA

A Report for
ST ALKMUND'S PCC

Archaeology Service

Shropshire Archives,
Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ
Tel: (01743) 255352 Fax: (01743) 255355



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SUMMARY

In October 2009 a watching brief was carried by the Shropshire Council Archaeology Service on work to the "dimmary" floor at St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury. No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered in the monitored works.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury (Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 01354), lies in the core of the historic town in a block of land formed by St Mary's Street and Dogpole, High Street, and Pride Hill. By tradition, the church was founded by Aethleflaed of Mercia in 912. By the late 18th century the church was in poor repair, and was almost entirely rebuilt in 1794-5.

1.2 In 2009 work was undertaken to form a new floor and install new drainage in the "dimmary" as a part of more extensive works to the church, which included the installation of a new kitchen and WCs.

1.3 Because of the potential archaeological significance of the site it was considered necessary that an archaeological watching brief should accompany the groundworks associated with the removal of the old floor in the "dimmary". The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the works.

1.4 The Archaeology Service was commissioned by Arrol and Snell Ltd on behalf of St Alkmund's PCC to carry out this watching brief.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The cult of Alkmund (Ealhmund), was being promoted in Mercia in the early 9th century, though tradition has it that St Alkmund's, Shrewsbury, was founded in the early 10th century by Aethelflaed of Mercia, with additional endowments in the later 10th century by Edgar (who is said to have created ten prebends for it). At Domesday, the church had twelve canons, i.e. it was a minster church (HER No. 01484). The largest of its Domesday Book estates was at Lilleshall, and when a house of Augustinian Canons was founded there in 1148, St Alkmund's was given to it. St Alkmund's and the adjacent St Julian's (Juliana) Church may have served as a double monastery, with St Juliana accommodating a community of women. The close connection between the church and the development of the Saxon burh is emphasised by its location within the King's Market. A spire by John Cheshire was added to the original Perpendicular tower in 1788, repaired and heightened in 1821 by John Straphen. The church was rebuilt in 1794-1795 in the Gothic style by the architects John Carline and Tilley following the collapse of the tower of nearby St Chad's Church in 1793. (Ironically the tower was the only part of the medieval church retained). (Shropshire HER No. 01354)

3 THE 2009 WORKS

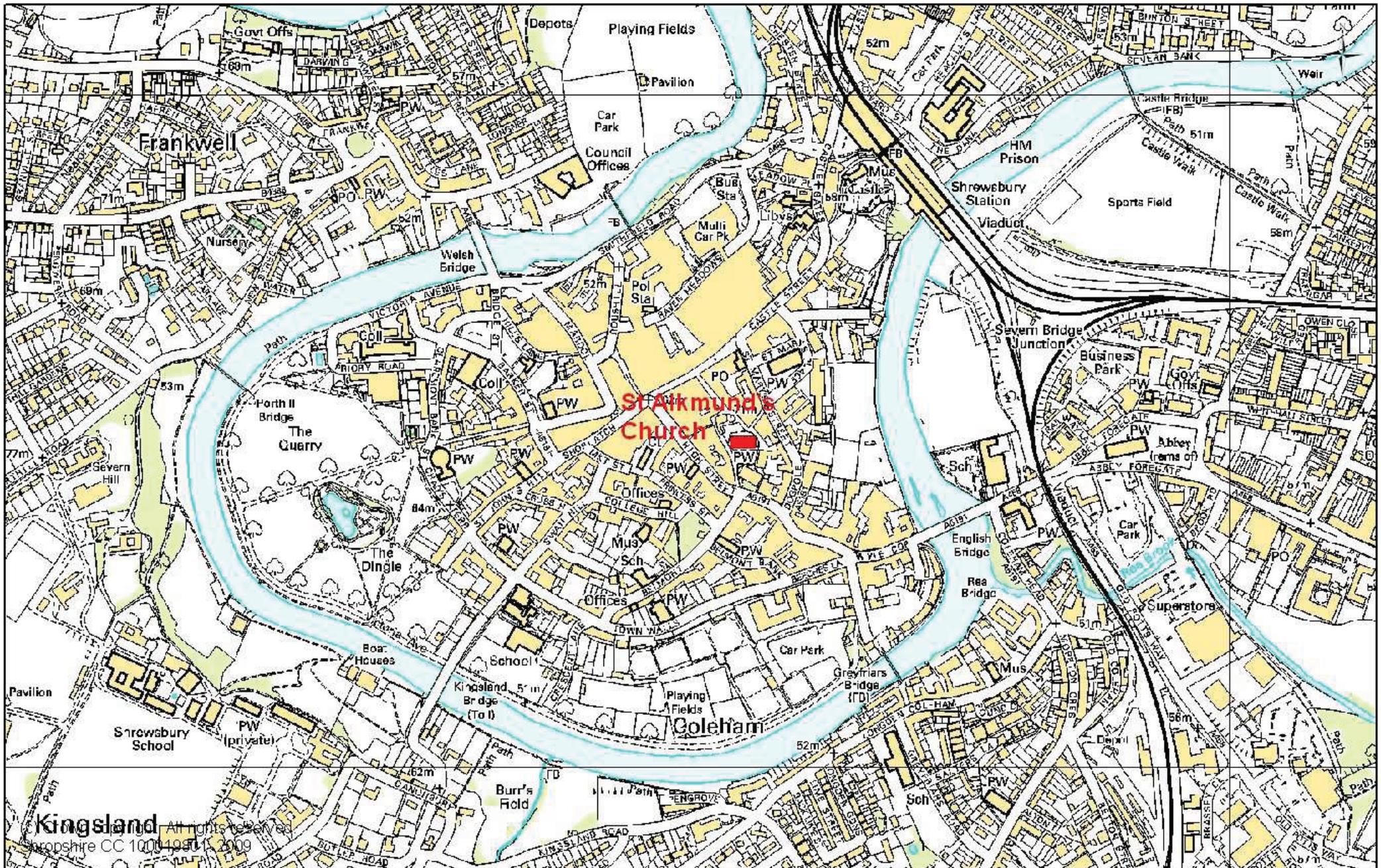
The existing concrete floor (1) in the dimmery was removed, and the underlying rubble hardcore (2) for this floor was partially excavated to a depth of 150mm. The removal of the floor exposed a brick-lined duct (3) and inspection chamber running along the south side of the dimmery, and carrying heating and water pipes.

The only feature exposed by the removal of the floor and hardcore was a thickening of the stonework (4) at the base of the tower the vice (spiral stair) wall in the NE corner of the "dimmery". The wall here has been cut back and thinned (probably during the 1794-5 rebuilding).

No further significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the watching brief, and no human remains were encountered.

ABBREVIATIONS

OS	Ordnance Survey
PRO	Public Record Office
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
HER	County Historic Environment Record, Shirehall, Shrewsbury
 TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society



St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury 2009
 Figure 1: Site location

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 Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY1 2AQ
 Scale: 1:7,500



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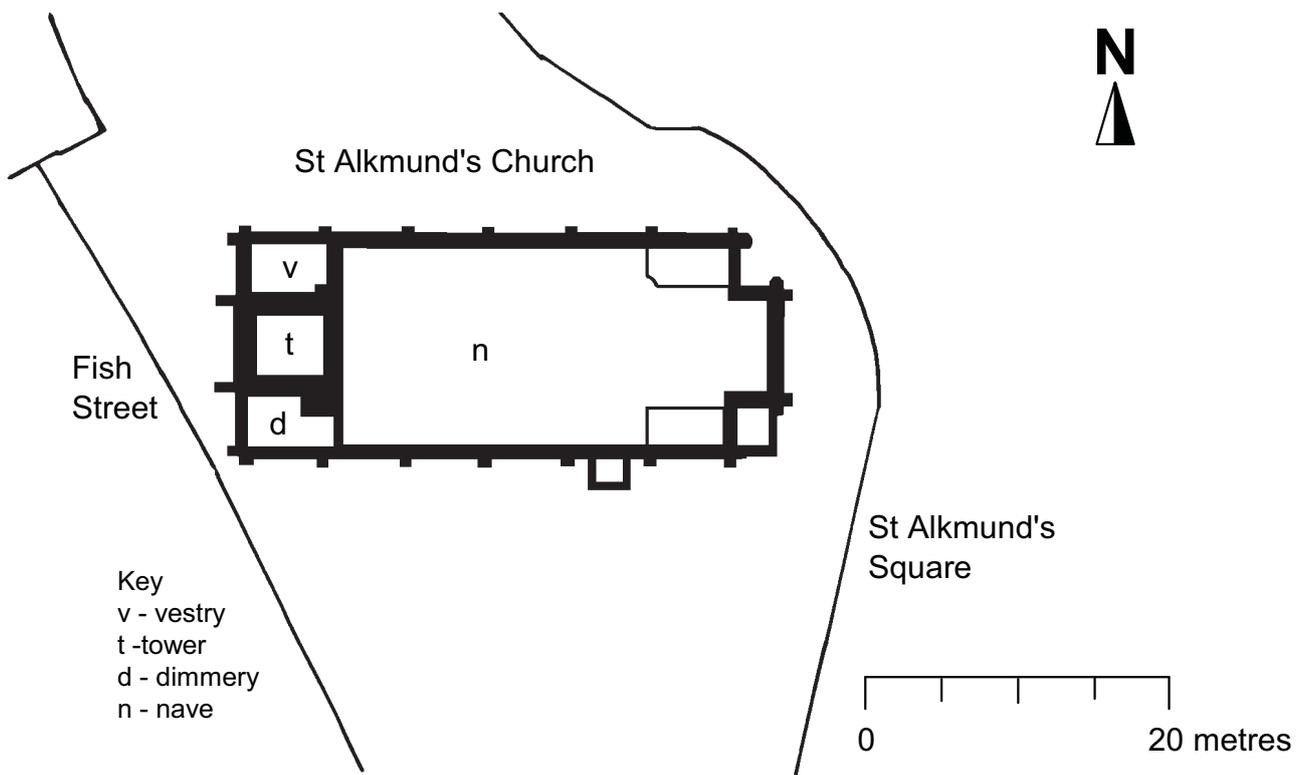


Figure 2: St Alkmund's Church; scale 1:500

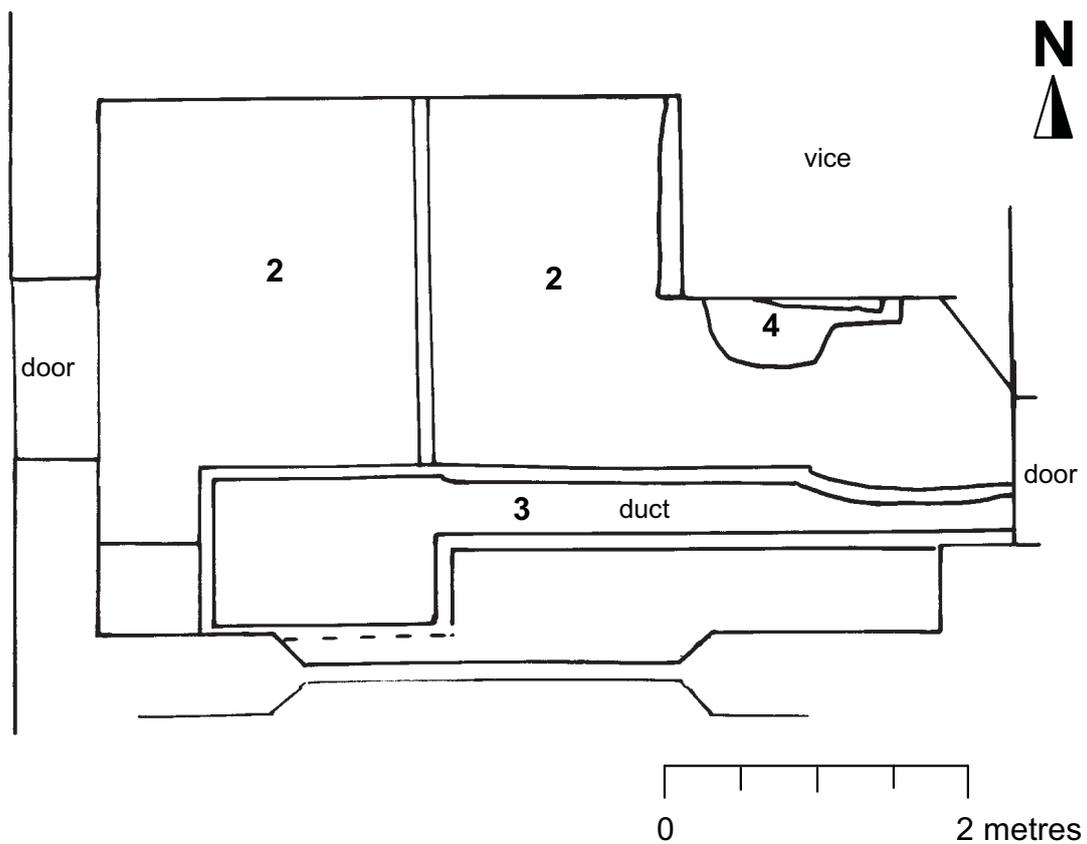


Figure 3: The "dimmery"; scale 1:50