

***A Watching Brief at
Church Cottage, Harley,
Shropshire, 2011***

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Archaeology Service



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**A WATCHING BRIEF AT CHURCH COTTAGE,
HARLEY, SHROPSHIRE, 2011**

by
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A report for
Mr & Mrs Seymour

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SUMMARY

In November 2011 groundworks were carried out for an extension to Church Cottage, Harley, Shropshire. The study area lay within the core of the deserted medieval settlement of Harley, immediately adjacent to the churchyard of St Mary's Church, and it was considered possible that archaeological remains, including human remains, might be encountered during the groundworks for the development. A watching brief on the development was carried out by the Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council. No significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the course of the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Harley is situated in central Shropshire about 15km southeast of Shrewsbury town centre. In November 2011 work began on the building of a single storey extension to the rear of Church Cottage, Harley, Shropshire (NGR SJ 5959 0149). The groundworks involved the excavation of foundations for the extension.

1.2 The development site lies within the Harley Conservation Area, immediately adjacent to the churchyard of St Mary's Church, Harley. Church Cottage is a stone-cased timber framed building of possible 17th-century date. It has been suggested that the medieval churchyard formerly extended into the area now occupied by Church Cottage and its garden. It was therefore considered that there was a possibility that archaeological remains might be encountered during the groundworks for the development.

1.3 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it was considered necessary that the groundworks associated with the development be accompanied by the implementation of a programme of archaeological work.

1.4 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned by the site owner, Mr Seymour, to carry out this programme of archaeological work in accordance with a scheme of investigation approved by the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council.

1.5 The aim of the programme of archaeological work was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the groundworks.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The village of Harley probably has its origins in the Saxon period. At the time of the Norman conquest, Harley was held as 4 separate manors, but by the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086 it formed a single holding held by Helgot from Roger of Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury. (Thorn and Thorn, 4,21,8 and notes).

No church or priest is mentioned in the Domesday Survey (although this is not unusual), and there was certainly a church at Harley by the 13th century. Of this medieval church only the tower survives; the tower is of three stages, the lower two stages being of 13th-century date, the upper stage dating to the 15th century. Two water-colours of the church by the Rev. E Williams exist in the collections of the Shropshire Records and Research Centre, showing the church before restoration in the 19th century. The earlier water-colour, dated 1788, shows the church from the northwest, the second view, dated 1821, is from the southeast. The church, apart from the medieval tower, was entirely rebuilt in 1846 by S. Pountney Smith. According to Sir Stephen Glynne, writing in 1866, the church was said to have been "formerly an interesting and characteristic specimen of the Shropshire village church". (HER No. 13305; SA ref. 6001/372 vol. 1, 60 and vol. 3, 103; Cox, 1997, 45)

2.2 Shropshire County Council's Archaeology Service carried out an archaeological evaluation in 1999 for a new access in the adjacent churchyard, revealing evidence for an earlier boundary wall behind the existing one, and the burial of an infant. (Hannaford, 1999). In 2003 the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust carried out an earthwork survey of the remains of the Harley Mill mill pond and leat (Jones, 2003).

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 The foundation trenches for the current development were excavated by machine under archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated to a width of 0.45m and a depth of 2m adjacent to the cottage sloping up at an angle of 45° to a depth of 0.95m in the garden to the east.

3.2 The natural subsoil consisted of an orange-brown sand (6) with gravel and pebbles. It lay at a depth of about 0.6m below the existing yard surface to the east of the cottage, beneath a deposit up to 0.4m thick of a brown sandy loam (5) with gravel, and the existing yard and garden deposits.

3.3 In the northern arm of the foundation trench, a large pit (8) lined on one side with unbonded bricks was cut into the natural sand and gravel. The top of this feature was cut across by drains and an old water pipe.

3.4 No significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the watching brief. No evidence was seen to support the theory that the site now occupied by Church Cottage had at one time formed part of the churchyard of St Mary's Church, Harley.

4 REFERENCES

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Ordnance Survey 1882: 1:2500 Shropshire Sheet Nos. L.3 & L.7, 1st edition
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Thorn, F and C (eds), 1986: *Domesday Book: Shropshire*, Phillimore, Chichester

ABBREVIATIONS

CPAT Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

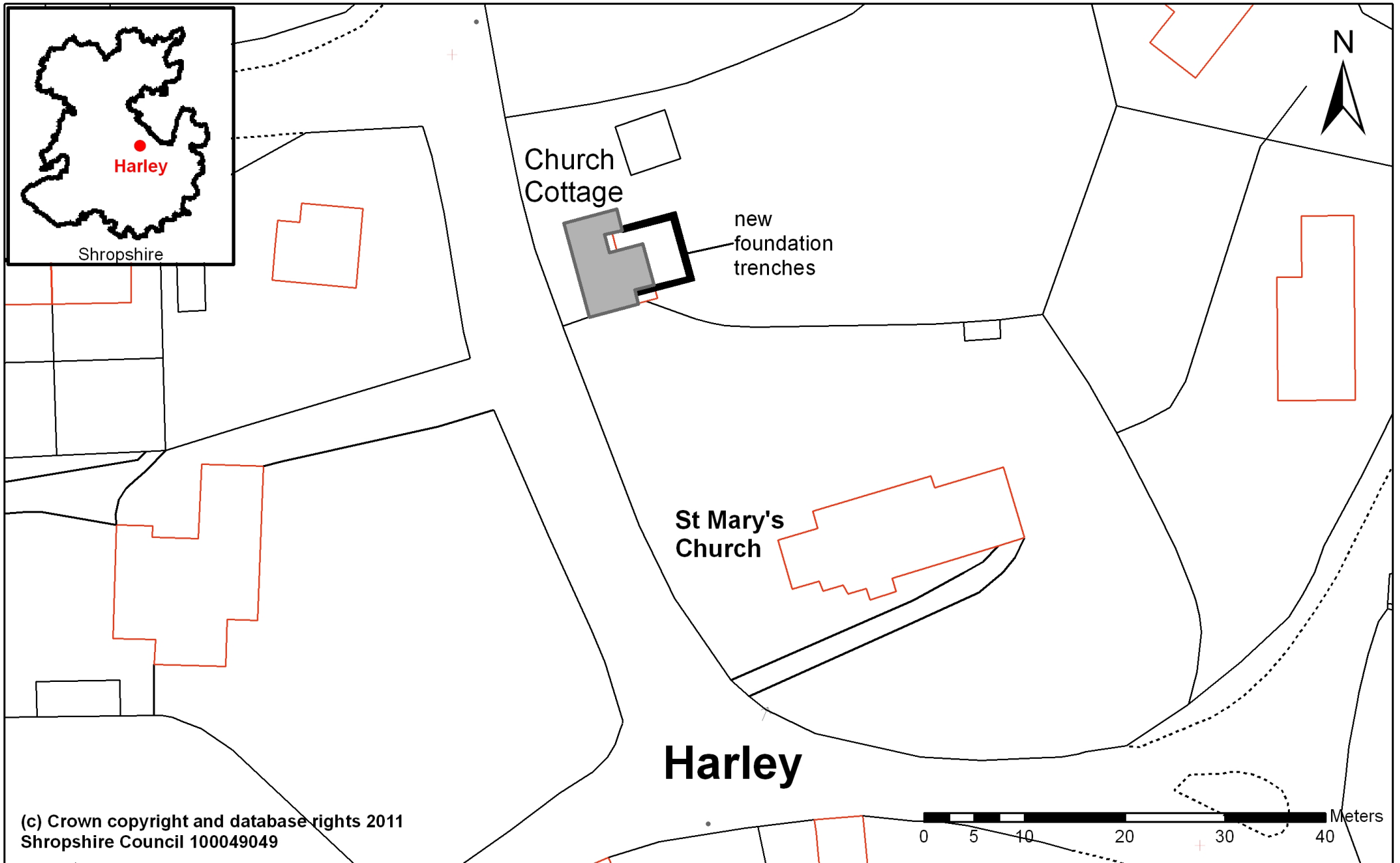
HER Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council

OS Ordnance Survey

SA Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury

TSAS Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society

TSAHS Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society



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Figure 1: Location of the study area

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 1:500



Photo 1: The study area, looking southwest



Photo 2: The deposits in the foundation trenches, looking north

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