

A Watching Brief at
All Saints' Church,
Claverley, Shropshire 2014

by
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Archaeology Service



**A WATCHING BRIEF AT ALL SAINTS' CHURCH,
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A report for
The Vicar and PCC of
All Saints' Church, Claverley

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In February and March 2014 groundworks were carried out at All Saints' Church, Claverley, Shropshire (NGR S0792 934) as part of a programme of works to the church.

1.2 The church (Shropshire Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 117689) dates to the late 11th century, with a north aisle added in the 12th century date and a south aisle in the 13th century. The chancel was remodelled in the 14th century. The upper parts of the tower date to the 15th century. The church is a Grade I Listed Building (National Ref. 254653).

1.3 The drainage work involved the excavation of a drain run from the south aisle just east of the porch, to run south, then west, and then northwest through the churchyard to an existing manhole. Because the drain trench would run through the churchyard, it was considered possible that archaeological remains, including human remains, might be encountered within the works area.

1.4 Because of the potential for archaeological remains it was considered necessary that the groundworks be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief during any ground disturbance. The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned on behalf of the Vicar and PCC of All Saints' Church to undertake the archaeological watching brief.

1.5 The aim of the watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains, including human remains that might be encountered during the groundworks.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Church of All Saints, Claverley (HER 11789) is built of the local Triassic red sandstone on a hill in the centre of the village. The church was founded by Roger of Montgomery in c. 1094, and four Norman arches on the north side of the nave and the tower base survive of the original church.

A north aisle with circular piers was added in the 12th century, and a south aisle in the 13th century. The chancel was re-built in the 14th century, and the upper part of the tower dates to the 15th century. Above the arcade of the north wall of the nave is a late 12th century wall painting in the form of a frieze reminiscent of the Bayeux Tapestry depicting 15 knights in combat. The painting was discovered during restoration work in 1902; other wall paintings dating to later in the medieval period were also discovered during this work. During this restoration work a massive sandstone raft foundation, said to be between three and seven feet thick, was discovered beneath the floor of the nave. The burials of a man, a child, and a small animal were discovered near the northeast corner of these foundations. The burials were aligned north-south; on this basis they were alleged to be of Roman date, and by extension the foundations were too. There appears however to be no reason why the foundations should not belong to the existing church building or to an immediate predecessor.

In the church there is a Norman font decorated with arches on patterned columns, and a second, bowl-shaped font claimed to be of Saxon date. There are incised slabs to Richard Spicer (1448) and his wife, and to members of the Gatacre family, Sir William Gatacre (1577) and his wife Helen and Francis Gatacre (1599) of Swyerton and his wife Elizabeth. In the south chapel is a chest tomb with alabaster effigies of Sir Robert Broke (d.1558) of Ludstone Hall and his two wives. (Home 1947; Newman & Pevsner, 2006, 102-4; Scard, 1990; Toghill, 1990)

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF.

3.1 A series of five site visits were made during the excavation of the drain runs to monitor the groundworks.

3.2 The drain runs were excavated to a depth of approximately 0.75m through the churchyard, running south from the south aisle for about 3m then running west for 15.5m and then northwest for a further 11m to tie in to an existing man-hole.

3.3 Where the drain cut through the south wall of the nave, the wall foundations were seen to rest on a platform of large cobbles, some up to 0.4m in diameter.

3.4 3m southeast of the southeast corner of the porch, the drain trench cut across a sandstone and brick wall 0.25m thick (6), the top of the wall lying 0.25m below the present ground surface. A cobble surface (8) was seen to lie beneath the present tarmac path in line with the porch itself.

3.5 At the east end of the south aisle the existing timber floor was removed with the intention of reducing the floor level here. However, the removal of the floor revealed the top of a brick barrel vault immediately beneath the floor. A number of disarticulated bone fragments were also visible in the surface of the sandy soil fill covering the southern side of the barrel vault. The tops of two rectangular brick vaults were also revealed either side of the barrel vault in the corners of the aisle, corresponding to the slabs of William Gatacre (d. 1577) and Francis Gatacre (d. 1599) currently mounted on the east wall of the south aisle. It was decided not to proceed with the ground reduction here because of the level of the top of the arch of the barrel vault.

3.6 No other significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the watching brief. A number of dis-articulated fragments of human bone were recovered during the excavations. These were bagged for later reburial.

4 REFERENCES AND SOURCES CONSULTED

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- Toghill, P**, 1990: *Geology in Shropshire*, Shrewsbury

Abbreviations:

- OS** Ordnance Survey
- SMR** Sites and Monuments Record, Environment Department, Shire Hall, Shrewsbury
- SRRC** Shropshire Records and Research Centre, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
- TSAS** Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society
- TSAHS** Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
- VCHS** Victoria County History of Shropshire

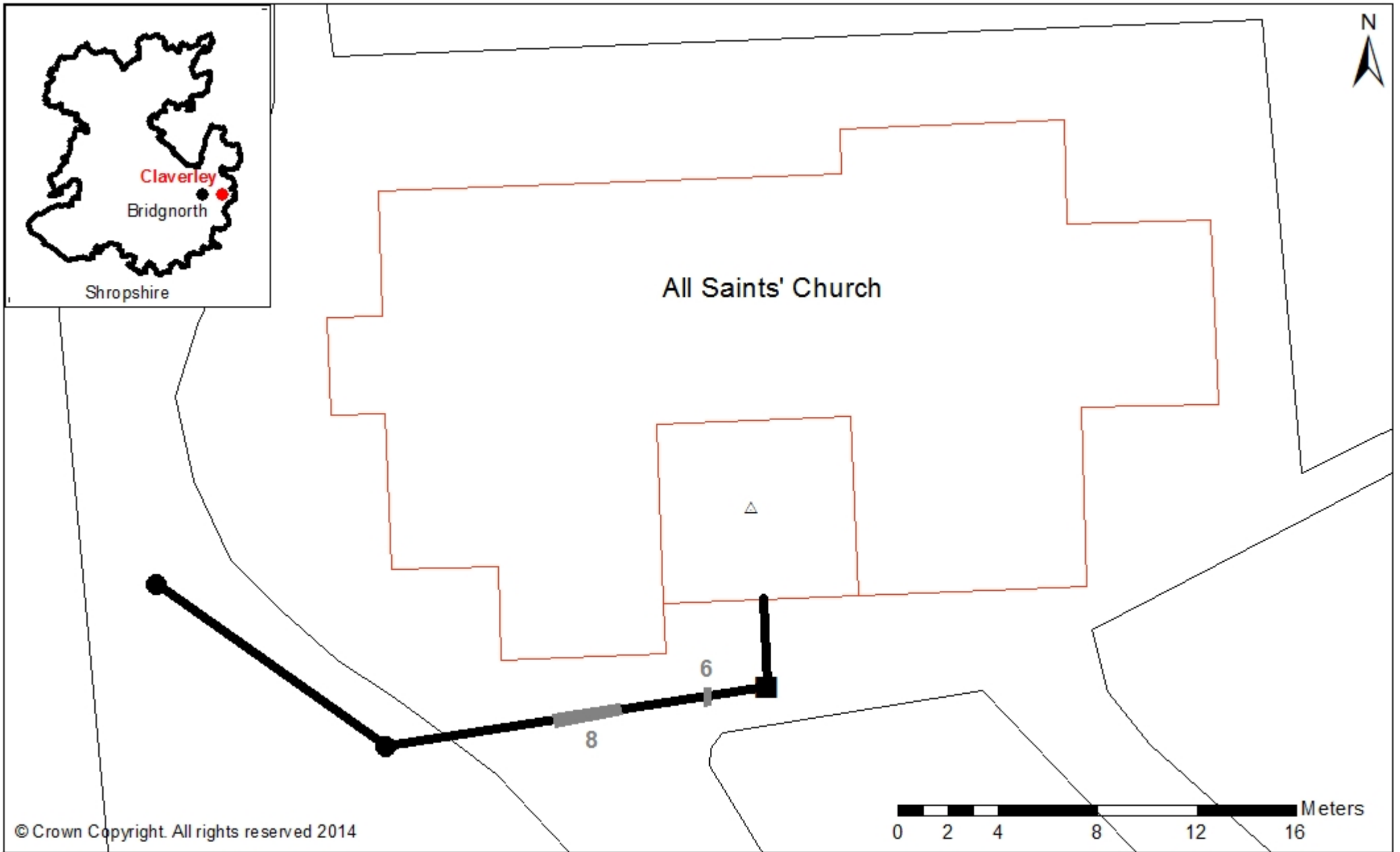




Photo 1: All Saints' Church, Claverley, looking SE



Photo 2: The cobble raft beneath the south aisle wall foundations, looking N (scale bar 1m)



Photo 3: The stone and brick wall (6), looking W (scale bar 1m)



Photo 4: The vaults at the east end of the south aisle, looking SE



Photo 5: The brick vault and slab to Francis Gatacre, looking E



Photo 6: The brick vault and slab to William Gatacre, looking E