

St Andrew's Church Shilton

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Report No 1139
December 2011



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: St Andrew's Church, Shilton, Trial Trench

Commissioned by: St Andrews PCC

Project Report No. 1139

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Contents

	Summary
1	Introduction
2	Location
3	Archaeological and Historical Background
4	Evaluation Trench
5	Conclusions
	Acknowledgements
	Bibliography
Appendices	
A	Listed Building Citation
B	List of Contexts
C	List of Finds

List of Figures

1	Site location and trench details
2	Shilton Church <i>c.</i> 1820, prior to the construction of outer north aisle
3	Present outer north aisle wall
4	Excavation of trial trench
5	Remains of graves 102 and 105 with skeletal remains 103 and 106
6	Grave 108 with sunken coffin lid
7	Grave 109 with sunken coffin lid
8	Pipe clay wig curler
9	Flint blade, dorsal view
10	Flint blade, ventral view

Summary

An archaeological evaluation, comprising a single trial trench, was undertaken on behalf of St Andrew's Parochial Church Council, Shilton, in advance of a new extension north of the present outer north aisle. The earliest part of the church dates to the 13th century and the outer north aisle dates to 1865.

Four coffin inhumations and a further grave cut were recorded in the evaluation, the highest remains at a depth of 0.78m below present ground level. Two of the graves had been truncated and all the graves had been covered by a layer of brownish yellow clay, possibly associated with groundworks for the 1865 outer north aisle. Finds of prehistoric flint, medieval floor tile, post-medieval pottery and ironwork and an early 18th-century wig curler were also recovered.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission is being sought from Rugby Borough Council for a single storey rear extension at St Andrew's Church, Shilton. The development site lies within an area of archaeological significance, in the graveyard of a medieval church, and the developer has therefore been advised that the development can not take place without a suitable archaeological scheme of works. This evaluation is the first phase of the programme of archaeological works, initially to assess the level and density of burials in the area of the proposed extension.

1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation with the stated aim of understanding any archaeological deposits or materials that may be disturbed or destroyed by the development. The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.

1.3 The evaluation was conducted on 28th November 2011 and this report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code SA11. The finds will be returned to St Andrew's PCC.

2 Location

2.1 St Andrew's Church is situated on a rise in the centre of the village of Shilton at National Grid reference SP 4037 8435.

2.2 The underlying geology of the site is mapped as Oadby Till, a grey pebbly clay with chalk, but borders onto Wolston Sand and Gravel, Wolston Clay and Alluvial clay with sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 1994).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Shilton is a medieval settlement (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No. MWA 8895). Shilton, then *Scelftone*, is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 when it had an estimated population of *c.*40 people. Wallef held it prior to the Conquest and the Count of Meulan held it after (VCH 1904, 315). There is no mention of a priest in the Domesday entries for either Shilton or Bulkington, suggesting there was no church or chapel at that date. Shilton chapel was built by Earl Ranulph de Gernon and restored to St Michael's in Coventry in the early 12th century. It became a chapelry of Bulkington for a short time in the 12th century. When the chapel of Shilton was in the parish of St Michael, Coventry, and came under the control of the Priory of Coventry, the dead were taken to the mother church in Coventry for burial. In the 15th century this rule was said to be established 'by ancient custom' (VCH 1969, 334).

3.2 The church of St Andrew is located in the centre of the village, standing in a small churchyard (MWA 4201; Fig 1). It is a Grade II* Listed Building and dates from the 13th century, but was rebuilt in the 14th century and again in the 15th century when the tower was added (see Appendix A). The outer north aisle was added in 1865 under the supervision of Sir Gilbert Scott and the chancel was restored at the same time (VCH 1951, 213). A drawing of Shilton church *c.*1820 shows the site before the outer north aisle was added (Fig 2). The north wall then had a central arched door and two windows, one set in a rectangular opening and one in a lancet opening.

3.3 To the north of the church the ground slopes upwards and immediately in front of the wall is a 1m wide stretch of blue brick paving and a drain, running alongside the church's north wall. There are no gravestones in the area to be evaluated but it is highly likely that there were burials here and the gravestones have been moved.

3.4 Parish registers first record burials at St Andrew's in 1696 but the earliest memorial in the graveyard dates to 1740 (WRO Z1 303). Memorial stones within the older part of the churchyard, in the land immediately surrounding the church, are mostly of 19th-century date with a small number of early 20th-century date. Part of the field to the north of the original churchyard became part of the cemetery in the 1920s, with the earliest memorials dating from 1929, suggesting that the old cemetery had largely gone out of use by this time (WRO Z1 308).

4 Trial Trench

4.1 One trial trench was excavated in the footprint of the proposed north extension by mini-excavator equipped with a 1.20m wide, toothless ditching bucket. The trench was 4.50m long at the base and 1.60-1.80m wide. The ground was reduced carefully down to the level at which skeletal material and grave cuts began to appear and this level was then cleaned and recorded. The graves cut into a layer of compact brownish yellow clay (120) which did not appear to be the geological natural. The level of the visible skeletal material in the two graves at the south-west end of the trench and the top of the graves with coffin lids, to the north-east, were all roughly at the same level, between 106.81m and 106.87m aod, covered by between 0.78m and 1.10m overlying material, depending on the slope of the ground.

4.2 Four of the graves contained the remains of oak coffins while the remaining one appeared not to have a coffin and may have been a shroud burial. Skeletal material was noted

in two of the graves; a mandible (remains of skeleton 103) in grave 102 was visible near the trench section, and the lower part of a skeleton (106) was visible in grave 105. It appears that these graves, and the upper part of their coffins, had been truncated (121) some time in the past. The coffins in graves 108 and 111 appeared to have been buried at a slightly lower level; these had sunken coffin lids, with the remains of indecipherable name plates and c.0.18m of grave fill above the coffin lids. In all cases the wood and skeletal remains were in very poor condition. A single dome-headed screw was recovered from the wood of coffin 118.

4.3 There were no grave cuts visible in the layers above the graves, nor was there any trace of the coffins or grave fills of graves 102 and 105 in the trench section. Above coffins 117 and 118, and above the skeletal remains in graves 102 and 105, was a layer of clean brownish yellow clay (114), up to 0.32m thick. This layer contained no finds and was not the usual mixed graveyard soil that generally occurs above graves. It appears to have been a layer deliberately laid, possibly with the express notion of covering burials, or associated with the groundworks for the 1865 outer north aisle.

4.4 The clay layer was overlain by a band of mixed brown and yellow clay loam (101), up to 0.70m thick but thinning to 0.40m closer to the church and only 0.10m adjacent to the paved area, where it had clearly been truncated. This layer produced an assortment of archaeological finds. The earliest of these finds was a fragment of prehistoric flint. This was a broken blade, triangular in profile with some cortex still attached (Figs 8 and 9). The way it had been worked suggested it would date to the late Mesolithic, or possibly early Neolithic period, giving a possible date range of 6000BC-3000BC (Brian Meredith pers. comm.). Two fragments of medieval floor tile were also recovered, one with a trace of brownish yellow glaze on its side and the other, a triangular corner piece, with slight amounts of green glaze on its surface. Both of the tiles surfaces were very worn through use. Floor tiles such as these were common in Warwickshire's medieval churches and generally date to the 13th or 14th century, suggesting they may have been part of the original floor of the church.

4.5 A slightly more unusual find was that of a ceramic wig-curler, dating to c.1700 by parallel to ones in The Museum of London collections (Le Cheminant 1978, 188). These were made of the same type of clay as tobacco pipes, and were used extensively in the 18th century to keep the curls of fashionable wigs in shape. More recent finds are sherds of internally black-glazed pottery of 18th-century date and a sherd of 19th-century earthenware. Metalwork recovered included an iron bolt, probably of 19th-century date.

4.6 The topsoil (100) above layer 101 consisted of 0.20m of dark greyish brown clay loam which contained occasional fragments of brick tile and small pebbles.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The evaluation consisted of a trial trench to the north of the church, in the area which would be disturbed by groundworks for the proposed north extension. A series of burials was recorded at a depth of 0.78-1.10m below present ground level

5.2 A number of finds were recovered from a mixed layer above the level of the graves. The late Mesolithic/early Neolithic flint is probably of local production and scatters of similar

material have been found at Nether Whitacre, Corley Rocks and Long Lawford, all relatively close to Shilton (Brian Meredith pers. comm.).

5.3 The medieval floor tiles recovered may well have come from an early floor within the church itself. They were very worn, suggesting centuries of use before the flooring was replaced.

5.4 Four coffin burials and one possible shroud burial were recorded during the evaluation. These are likely to be 19th-century in date but it is possible some are earlier and it may be possible to tell this from coffin fittings if the graves were to be excavated. Two of the burials had been truncated so that only the coffin bases and parts of the skeletons remained. Two of the coffin lids had partly collapsed into the coffins themselves and again the ground had been truncated, here to the level of the top of the coffins. The depth of soil currently covering the burials varied according to the slope of the ground.

5.5 Other finds dated to the 18th and 19th centuries. One of the 18th-century potsherds was very worn, as if it had been abraded in a ploughsoil. This may suggest that some of the soil was brought into the graveyard as part of landscaping, perhaps during the erection of the outer north aisle in 1865.

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

A Listed Building Citation

SHILTON CHURCH ROAD

SP48SW (West side)

7/23 Church of St. Andrew

06/10/60

- II*

Church. Rebuilt C14 and C15; C15 tower and porch. Chancel restored and outer north aisle added by George Gilbert Scott 1865. Regular coursed sandstone; tower of ashlar. Chancel and porch have old plain-tile roofs; chancel has C19 coped gable parapet with moulded kneelers. Nave and aisles have lead roofs; nave has C19 moulded embattled parapet; aisles have moulded parapets. Chancel, nave, north inner and outer aisles, west tower, south porch. 2-bay chancel, 4-bay nave. Splayed plinths throughout. Chancel has diagonal buttresses of 2 offsets. 3-light east window has cusped intersecting tracery. Host windows have hood moulds. Blocked chamfered north doorway. North and south sides have straight-headed eastern windows of 2 trefoiled lights with moulded spandrels, and western lancets. Nave has plinth to part of south wall only. 4 buttresses of 2 offsets. Central open timber porch has moulded timbers and C19 tracery. Stone benches. Queen strut roof. Moulded doorway inside has hood mould and C19 door with decorative ironwork. Straight-headed Perpendicular 2-light windows to left and right above porch. Eastern and western windows have cusped Y-tracery. Angles have restored pinnacles. North aisle has gabled diagonal east buttress, now partly embedded in outer aisle. Lean-to roof. 3-light east window has reticulated tracery. Renewed north-west window has cusped Y-tracery. Outer aisle is largely similar. Buttress has carved heads. Shallow-pitched roof has pinnacles at angles. Moulded north-west doorway. 2-light straight-headed north-eastern window. 2-light west window has reticulated tracery. Perpendicular tower of 2 stages. Splay and high moulded plinths. Diagonal buttresses of 4 offsets rise into crocketed pinnacles. Moulded embattled parapet. High first stage has simple moulded Tudor-arch west doorway in chamfered straight-headed surround with sunk spandrels. C19 plank door has decorative ironwork. Renewed 3-light window above has deep splayed jambs. North east angle has shallow stair projection. Splayed course between stages. Second stage has 2-light openings with transoms and deep splayed jambs. South side has painted clockface. Interior: chancel is plastered. South-east piscina. North wall has stone shelf on half-octagonal colonnette. Some C19 stencil work around east window. Boarded barrel roof has chamfered arched braces with carved wood angel corbels, and iron ties. Part of responds and springing only of chancel arch remain. Nave has piscina in east jamb of south-east window, with trefoiled ogee openings to east and north. 4-bay Perpendicular north arcade of 2 chamfered orders, octagonal piers with moulded bases and capitals, and continuous hood mould. First bay has only a corbel to east. Third and fourth bays are separated by a broader pier with 2 half-octagons and a chamfered south respond. Carved head between second and third bays. Tower arch of 2 segmental-pointed orders. C19 Perpendicular roof. North aisle has arch of 2 continuous chamfered orders dividing off west bay. East window has hood mould. 3-bay C19 aisle arcade is similar to nave arcade, but with one round pier between second and third bays, and carved heads between each arch. Outer aisle has chamfered, moulded and cusped crown post roof. Fittings are almost entirely of 1865. Chancel has encaustic tiles and painted metal roundels on east wall. Arcaded altar rails. Low screen and gates incorporate some C15 traceried panels. Octagonal moulded and traceried wood pulpit. Heavily ornamented octagonal stone font. North aisle screen has plate tracery openings. Fine set of 13 three-branch candle-stands and 2 eight-branch candelabra of painted metal and brass, possibly by Skidmore of Coventry. Stained glass: east window 1865 by Clayton and Bell; north aisle east window mid C19 by Powell. Other C19 glass in nave and chancel. (V.C.H.: Warwickshire, Vol. VI, pp.213-4; Buildings of England: Warwickshire, p.395).

Listing NGR: SP4037884360

B List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>
100	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown clay loam with occasional brick, tile and small pebbles, 0.14m deep
101	Layer	Mixed brown and yellow clay loam with occasional tile fragments, 0.40m deep
102	Grave cut	Grave, aligned roughly E-W
103	Skeleton	Human skeleton, mandible visible only, in coffin 115
104	Grave fill	Brownish yellow clay in grave cut 102
105	Grave cut	Grave, aligned roughly E-W
106	Skeleton	Human skeleton, legs visible only, in coffin 116
107	Grave fill	Brownish yellow clay in grave cut 105
108	Grave cut	Grave, aligned roughly E-W
109	Skeleton	Human skeleton (within coffin 117)
110	Grave fill	Brownish yellow clay in grave cut 108
111	Grave cut	Grave, aligned roughly E-W
112	Skeleton	Human skeleton (within coffin 118)
113	Grave fill	Brownish yellow clay in grave cut 111
114	Layer	Brownish yellow clay (capping all grave cuts), 0.32m thick
115	Coffin	Oak coffin in 102, for skeleton 103
116	Coffin	Oak coffin in 105, for skeleton 106
117	Coffin	Oak coffin in 108, for skeleton 109
118	Coffin	Oak coffin in 111, for skeleton 112
119	Grave cut	Grave without coffin, aligned roughly E-W
120	Layer	Firm brownish yellow clay (all graves cut into this layer)
121	Grave fill	Soft brownish yellow clay in grave 119
122	Cut	Truncation of graves 102 and 105

C List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>
101	Flint	Late Mesolithic blade, some cortex present	1
101	Pipe clay	Wig curler, c.1700, 50mm long	1
101	Iron	Bolt	1
101	Tile	Hand-made roof tile	1
101	Tile	Medieval floor tile	2
101	Pottery	Black-glazed coarseware, 18th century	3
101	Pottery	19th-century earthenware	1
118	Iron	Screw with slotted dome head, broken	1

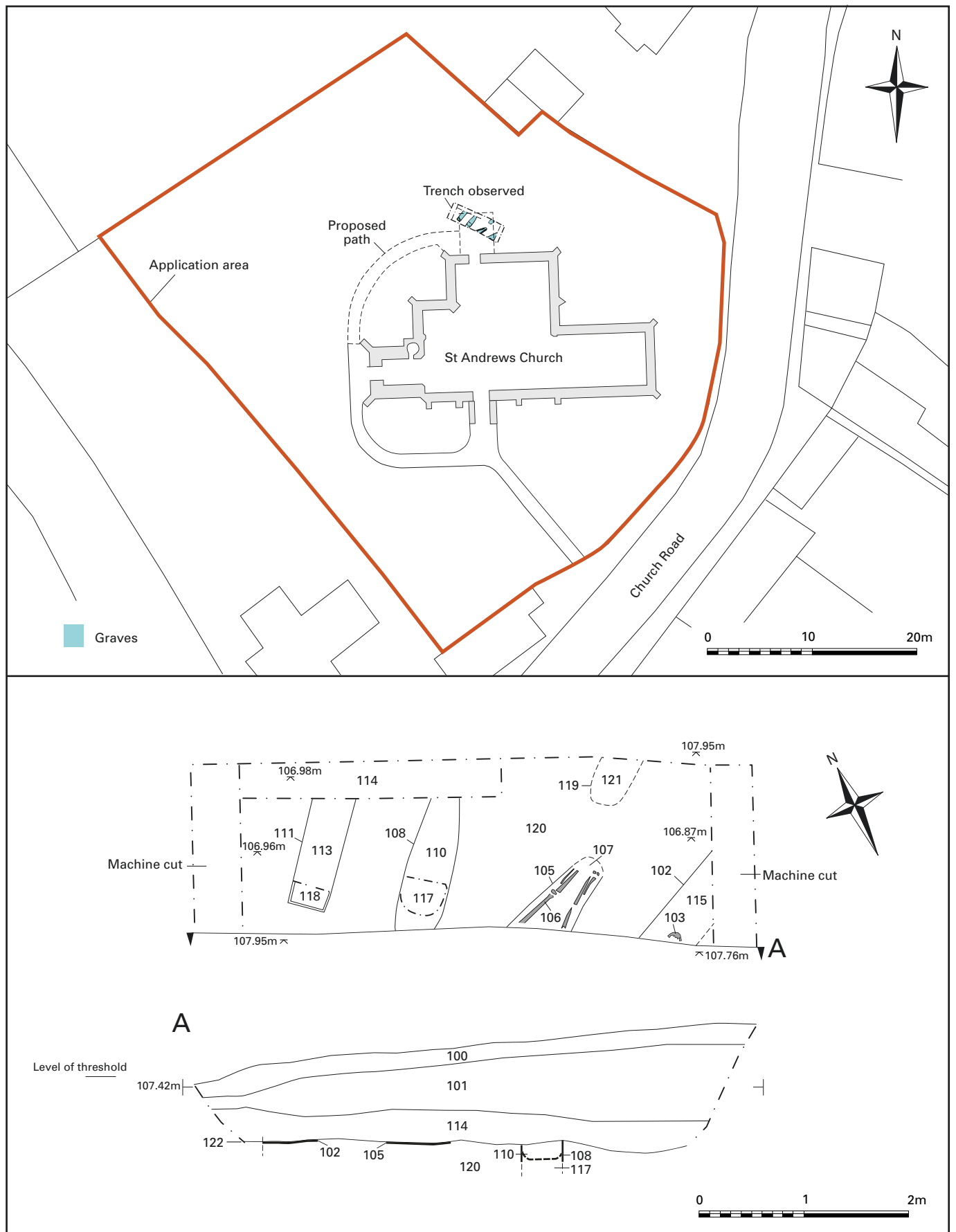


Fig 1: Site location and trench detail



Fig 2: Shilton Church c.1820, prior to the construction of outer north aisle



Fig 3: Present outer north aisle wall



Fig 4: Excavation of trial trench



Fig 5: Remains of graves 102 and 105 with skeletal remains 103 and 106



Fig 6: Grave 108 with sunken coffin lid



Fig 7: Grave 111 with sunken coffin lid



Fig 8: Flint blade, dorsal view



Fig 9: Flint blade, ventral view



Fig 10: Pipe clay wig curler