

St Mary's Church, Middle Tysoe, Warwickshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1460
July 2014



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: St Mary's Church, Middle Tysoe
Commissioned by: Mr David Spragg on behalf of St Mary's Church PCC
Project Report No. 1460
Site Code: TM14
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National Grid Reference: SP 3408 4463
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Archaeology Warwickshire

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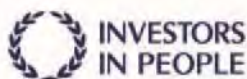
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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief took place at St Mary's Church, Middle Tysoe, after the floor below the westernmost series of pews had been removed. In 2006, in the area immediately to the west, a previously unknown wall foundation had been found, thought to be from an early tower, along with brick vaults of post-medieval date. The present programme of ground reduction only removed the loose surface rubble and a small amount of compacted rubble from below the floor boards and did not impact on archaeological levels, although a small amount of residual medieval floor tile and other post-medieval material was recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A Faculty has been granted by the Diocese of Coventry for the removal of the westernmost rows of pews in the nave at St Mary's Church, Middle Tysoe, Warwickshire. The Faculty was subject to a condition requiring the petitioner to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological works to be undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation to be approved by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA).

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of archaeological observation and recording of the below-floor works, in accordance with a brief prepared by the DAA and a Proposal for Fieldwork prepared by Catherine Coutts of Archaeology Warwickshire, was commissioned from, and carried out, in July 2014. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be deposited with Warwickshire Museum under site code TM14.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (St Mary's Church) is located in Main Street, Middle Tysoe, at national grid reference SP 3408 4463 in the parish of Tysoe (Fig. 1). The area of new flooring lies at the west end of the nave, immediately to the east of an area investigated in 2006.

2.2 The underlying geology of the site is Lower Lias clay (British Geological Survey 1963).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The name Tysoe is derived from the Anglo-Saxon god Tiw and suggests early origins for the settlement (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 8955). The Domesday Book (1086) records that the manor of Tysoe was rated at 23 hides, and prior to the Norman Conquest belonged to the thegn Waga, passing to Robert de Stafford after the Conquest.

There were 53 villeins, 9 serfs and a priest (VCH 1904, 328), suggesting a relatively large total population of around 315. The manor remained in the possession of Stafford's descendants until 1520, since when it has been held by the Compton family. A weekly market was granted in 1341, along with a four-day fair at Lammas and other manorial rights (VCH 1949, 176-7). The churchyard contains a 15th-century preaching cross, believed to have originally been in the market place (HER MWA 2058, SAM 300091). At one time there was a figure of a horse (the Red Horse) cut into a nearby hillside at Edge Hill. Legend has it that this commemorated the killing by the Earl of Warwick of his own horse at the battle of Towton in 1461, as a sign that he would not abandon the field, but some consider the horse may have Anglo-Saxon origins (VCH 1949, 175). The horse is mentioned by Speed and in Camden's *Britannia*, in the early 17th century. Subsequent research has shown that there were at least five horse figures cut into the hillside over time (Cardus and Miller 1965, 1). The village contains a number of listed buildings, several of which date from the 17th century.

3.2 The Domesday Book reference to a priest at Tysoe in 1086 suggests that there may also have been an Anglo-Saxon church, possibly on the same site as, or close to, the present church. The church guide book and website suggest that the church may stand on the site of a Romano-Celtic temple (Tysoe Church nd; Tysoe Church 2006). The evidence cited is firstly that the church is due east of the site of the former horse figure, and secondly that on the vernal equinox the rising sun bisects the site of the horse and strikes the centre of the east window of the church. In the absence of any corroborating physical evidence this can probably be discounted as speculative.

3.3 The earliest elements of the existing church nave date from the very late 11th or early 12th century (HER MWA 2055). The subsequent sequence of alterations and repairs described in VCH (1949, 177-181; Fig. 2) is summarised below.

3.4 The south aisle was added in the mid-late 12th century, followed by the addition of the tower and the lengthening of the nave c.1200. At the same time, or shortly afterwards, the aisle may have been lengthened, the original respond being moved westwards and a new pillar and arch inserted. It is possible that the new arch represents an extension merely of the arcade, the aisle itself having already been extended at the same time as the nave, although this suggestion is not put forward in VCH. The arched entrance between the nave and tower is a later 13th-century insertion, and probably replaced an earlier entrance.

3.5 The north aisle dates from c.1330-40, and the VCH suggests that the aisle and arcade were built outside the existing north wall of the nave which was then removed, thus

widening the nave by a few feet. This seems to be based on the offset position of the tower entrance relative to the nave walls and the presence in the east wall of the tower "*about 1-1½ yards [0.91-1.37m] north of the archway to the nave [of a] broken vertical seam...north of which the masonry is smaller and more regular, like that of the north wall of the arcade*". The present 15th-century chancel and nave are symmetrical on a common east-west axis in the centre of the chancel arch. If the original chancel was on the same axis, the widening described by VCH implies that the nave and chancel were previously asymmetrical. The south aisle was largely rebuilt at the same time, retaining the 12th-century doorway. In the 15th century the south porch was added, the chancel rebuilt, and another stage added to the tower. The 16th and 17th centuries saw alterations to the windows of the south aisle.

3.6 Various repairs were carried out in the 18th century, including the probable underpinning of the tower and rebuilding some of its buttresses. The church was refurbished by Sir Gilbert Scott in the mid 1850s, and the vestry and organ chamber added in 1872. Further repair and restoration was carried out in 1912, when most of the internal plaster was removed.

3.7 In 2006 archaeological recording was carried out at St Mary's Church during construction of a toilet and utility area at the west end of the nave and the excavation of the associated service trench to the north and east of the church (Greig 2006; HER EWA 7676). The work showed that important archaeological remains survive just below the present floor. A previously unsuspected foundation was found, interpreted as an early west tower, replaced when the nave was extended in the mid to late 12th century. The evidence also suggests that, contrary to the hypothesis in the Victoria County History, the original north wall of the church was on the line of the present north wall of the nave rather than to the south of it. The archaeological work demonstrated that early building elements left no evidence above ground and that complex and important archaeological remains are present at a high level below the present church floor.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination.

4.2 The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.

4.3 The objective of the work was a programme of controlled excavation to development formation levels, or the geological natural, whichever the higher.

4.4 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications.

4.5 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with WSI and Brief.

5 WATCHING BRIEF

Floor reduction

5.1 The floorboards (1) supporting the rear sets of pews had already been removed at the time of the site visit and the dwarf brick walls (2-5) supporting these floor areas had largely been dismantled and taken off site. It is presumed that the walls and floors were part of the 19th-century restoration of the church, although some of the pews around the font are believed to be 16th-century in date (Tysoe Church n.d.).

5.2 The two areas being observed measured c.1.70m x 3.40m each, with areas of old stone flooring between them, and to the north and south, and modern stone flooring (dating to 2006) to the west, on a base of limecrete, which spilled somewhat into the area of the present works. The lowest level reached, at a depth of c.0.10m below floor level, was a layer of compacted rubble (7). This ranged in colour from a dark brown to a light/medium brown sandy loam, containing large amounts of stone rubble and mortar fragments and this was reduced in level by 50-80mm to reach the formation level at which the new limecrete was to be laid. Above the compacted rubble was a layer of loose rubble (6) between the dwarf wall lines, which contained fragments of roof slate, mortar and rotten fragments of wood. The compact rubble (7) produced a fragment of green-glazed medieval floor tile, a fragment of green window glass, two fragments of slate pencil and a fragment of black-glazed pottery, while the looser rubble (6) produced a complete, triangular, yellow-glazed medieval floor tile.

5.3 The rubble layers were cut by shallow diagonal channels (8 and 9) containing ducted electricity cables (10 and 11).

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The shallow nature of the ground reduction meant that archaeological levels were not disturbed, although the rubble removed did contain residual medieval floor tile fragments. The existing stone floor level is at 107.26m AOD; the present reduced floor level is no deeper than 107.08m, some 0.13m higher than the brick vaults exposed in the south-east of the area in 2006, although it is likely that these continue below the reduced ground level in the southern of the two areas. The stone tower foundations recorded in 2006 were highest to the west (107.10m and 107.06m AOD) and lower to the east (106.92-107.00m AOD). It is therefore possible that an eastern tower wall lies below the formation level reached.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Mr David Spragg of Acanthus Clews architects for initially commissioning the work, and to the Rev. Martin Leaton on site.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Listed Building Citation

List Entry Description

Details

TYSOE MAIN STREET

SP3544 (West side)

Middle Tysoe

17/88 Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

13/10/66

GV I

Church. Late C11 origins, with late C12, C13, C14 and C15 alterations and additions. Restored 1854 by Gilbert Scott. Squared, coursed ironstone. Parapeted roofs. Chancel, nave with clerestory, north and south aisles and west tower. Chancel of 2 bays with offset buttresses, plinth and parapet. To east a 5-light cusped C15 window within hollow chamfered surround. 2 further 3-light cusped windows to south, and one to north, with hollow chamfered surrounds. To north a C19 vestry with 2 reticulated windows and plank door within pointed arch. Nave of 4 bays with pierced quatrefoil parapet to south, wavy line to north. Corbel table below of carved animal heads. Pinnacles with cusped panels and crockets. Aisles have plinth, coped parapet, offset diagonal buttresses and gargoyles to north. To centre of south aisle a plank door within late C12 round headed arch of 2 orders of shafts with rings, and water-leaf capitals with lozenge and nailhead mouldings in the arch. Above an Agnus Dei panel in bas relief with carved corbel to either side, that to right a beakhead. C15 porch with double chamfered arch and moulded imposts. Double plank doors. To left of door a C20 two-light window. To right a C14 three-light reticulated window with hood mould and label stops. To far right a C15 three-light square-headed window with cusped lights, hood mould and carved label stops. To north aisle a plank door within moulded, pointed arch with hood mould and label stops. To left and right of porch a C14 three-light reticulated window. To far left a three-light window of intersecting tracery. Windows have hood moulds and label stops. To west of north aisle a single round-headed light. Renewed 2-light reticulated window with hood mould and label stops to west of south aisle. Clerestory has eight C14 square-headed 2-light windows to north and south of differing cusped tracery. All have dropped hood moulds and label stops. To east gable end a C17 sanctus bell turret. West tower of 4 offset stages with plinth, buttresses and

battlemented parapet with pinnacles. To south a blocked round-headed arch and round-headed light to west. To third stage a late C12 corbel table, with a small single light below to north and south. Fourth stage has 2-light cusped bell chamber openings with hood moulds and label stops. Cusped panels to each corner, and gargoyles below parapet. Interior: C15 many-moulded chancel arch. Nave arcade of 4 bays. To south C12 round piers with scalloped and round capitals on square abaci. Responds to east and west. 2 blocked C11 openings above. North arcade has C15 octagonal piers with double-chamfered arches and responds, that to east with small cusped piscina. Pointed doorway to north. C15 triple-chamfered tower arch, now blocked. Roofs mostly C15, partly restored. Nave and aisle roofs are supported on C15 carved corbel heads. In chancel a tomb to William Clarke, died 1618. In north aisle wall a C12 tomb in C14 cusped ogee recess, with finial. In east wall of south aisle a memorial tablet to Ralph Wilcox, died 1659. In north aisle wall a brass to Thomas Mastrope, dated 1463. In east wall of north aisle brasses to the Browne family, dated 1598 and 1611. A tablet in porch, dated 1662. 2 further C17 tablets in external porch wall. In nave a late C14 octagonal stone font with reliefs of the Virgin and Child, the Baptism of Christ and various saints in crocketed ogee gables. (Buildings of England: Warwickshire, pp.435-6; V.C.H.: pp177-181).

Listing NGR: SP3414844407

B List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	Floorboards	19th century
2	Dwarf wall	19th century
3	Dwarf wall	19th century
4	Dwarf wall	19th century
5	Dwarf wall	19th century
6	Rubble layer	loose
7	Rubble layer	compacted
8	Channel	modern
9	Channel	modern
10	Cable and duct	modern
11	Cable and duct	modern
12	New stone flooring	2006
13	Limecrete base	2006
14	Old stone floor	19th century

C List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Date/Comments</i>
6	Tile	1	yellow-glazed medieval floor tile, triangular, mortar-covered, 14th/15th-century
7	Pottery	1	18th/19th-century, black-glazed, mortar-covered
7	Tile	1	green-glazed medieval floor tile fragment 14th/15th-century
7	Slate	2	pencil fragments
7	Glass	1	window, green, hand-made

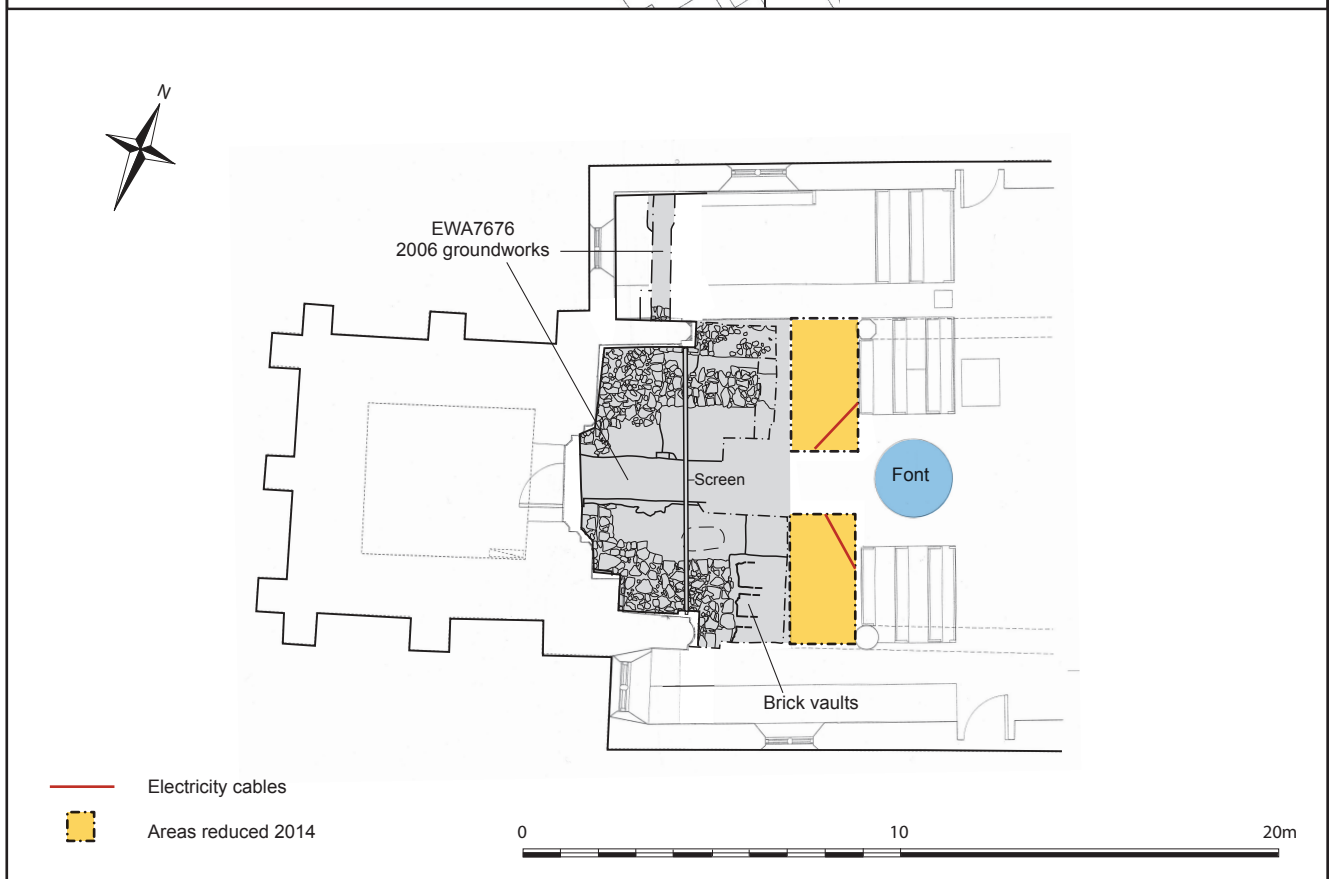
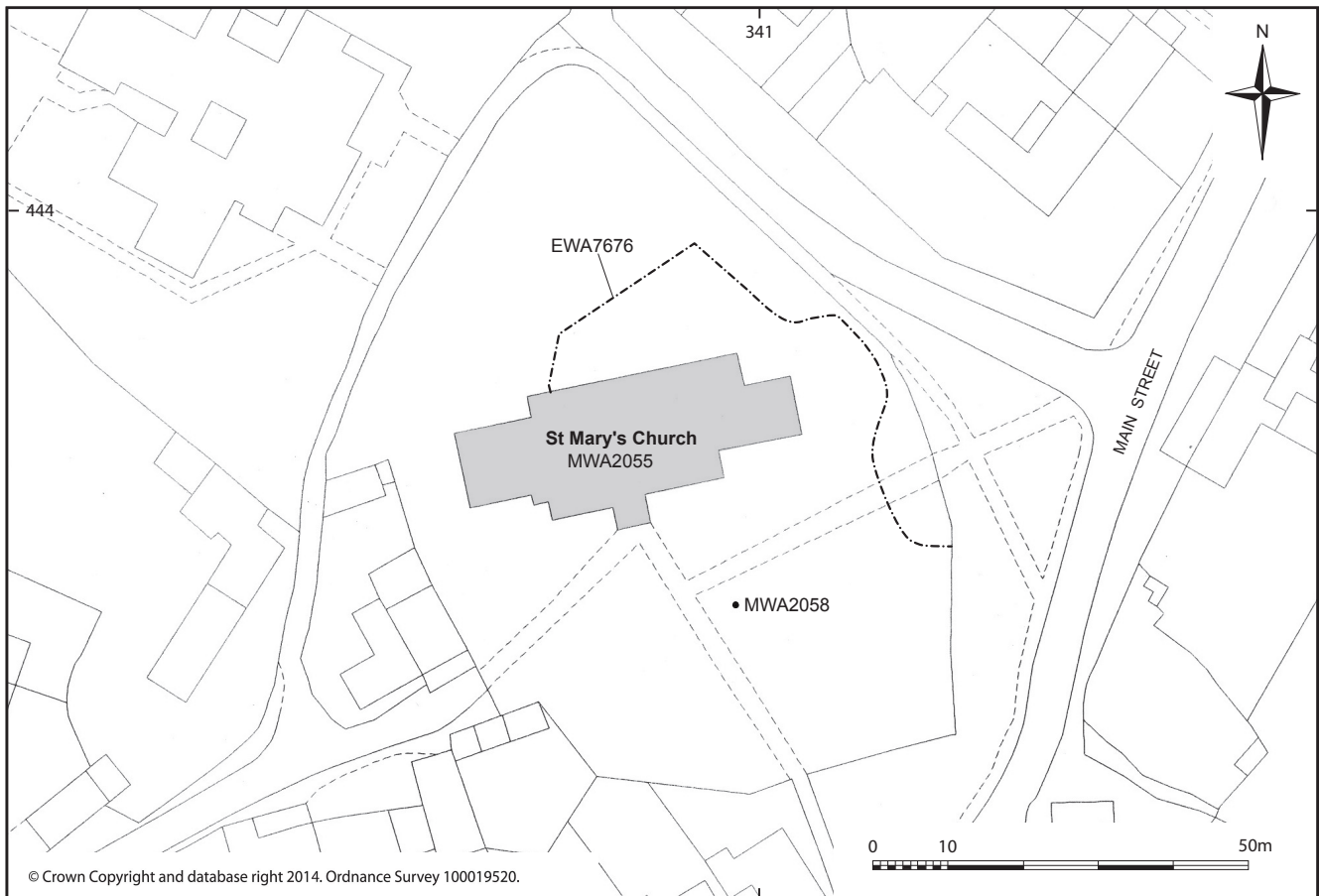


Fig 1: Site location and groundworks



Fig 2: Rubble (6) exposed below floor boards

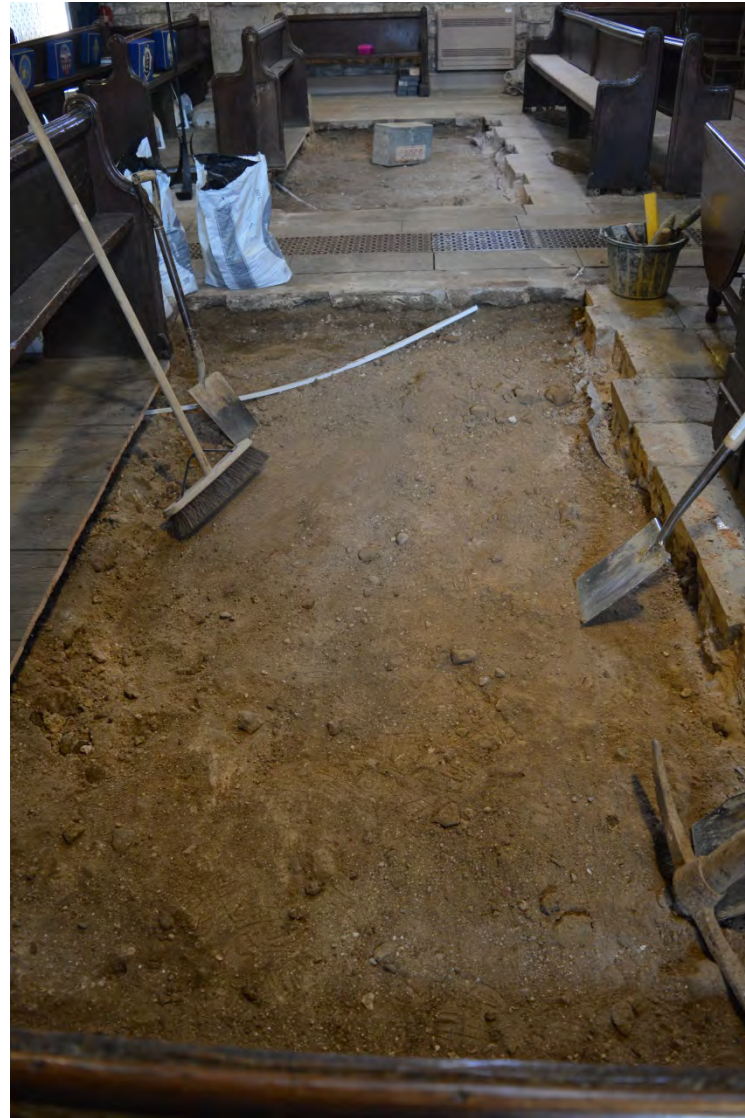


Fig 3: Formation level within compact rubble 7