

Aylton Church, Herefordshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief.



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Herefordshire Archaeology is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, maintains the county Historic Environment Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects.

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Summary:

An archaeological watch brief was required in order to monitor drainage works within Aylton churchyard. No features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological or historical significance were encountered during these works. This is largely due to the relatively shallow nature of the works and the re-use of an existing drainage run. The works did however confirm that there was no boundary wall along the eastern side of the churchyard.

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. NGRs are accurate to approximately 10m. Measured dimensions are accurate to within 1m at a scale of 1:500, 0.1m at 1:50, and 0.02m at 1:20.

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Introduction

This report (EHE 80122), provides an account of small scale watching brief carried out by Herefordshire Archaeology at Aylton Church, (HER N0: 6839, Listed Building No: 1099070), in the parish of Aylton, Herefordshire.

The watching brief was required in order to record any remains of archaeological and historical importance revealed and / or disturbed by drainage works.

The fieldwork comprised the recording by photographic record of the drainage run and observation of the excavation works where appropriate.

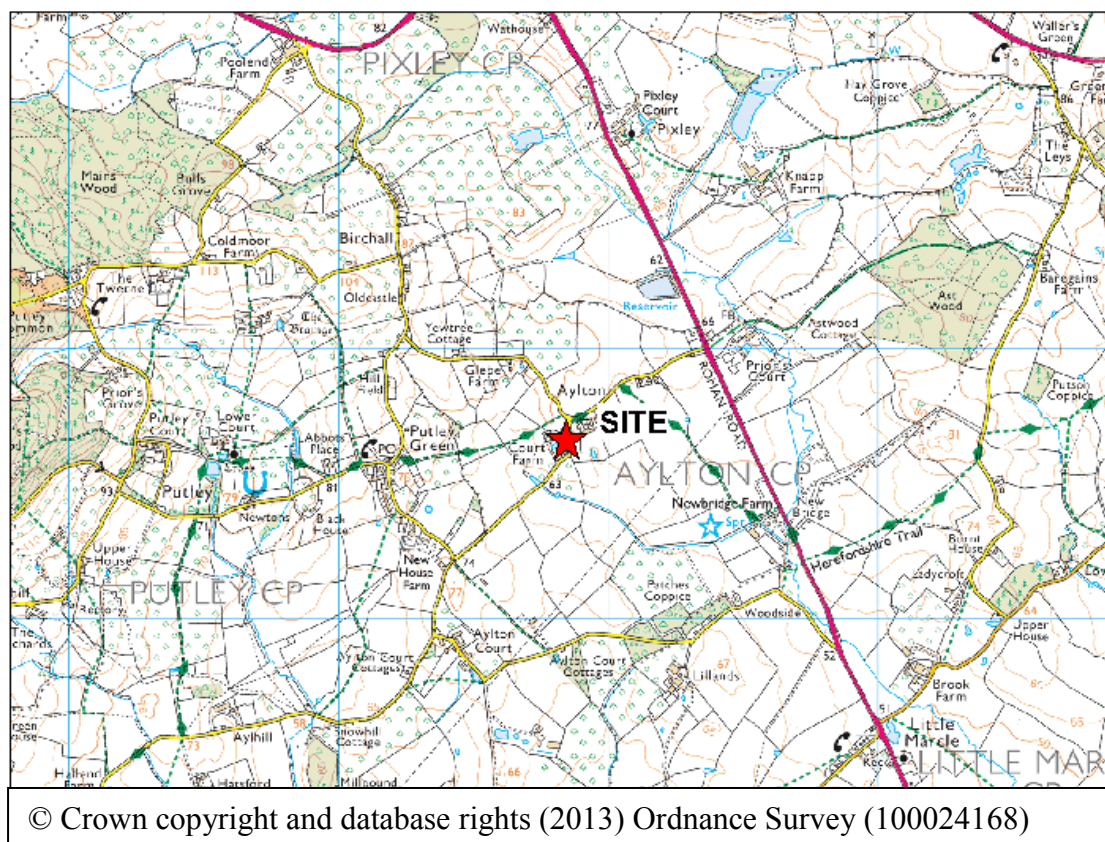


Figure 1: Site location of Aylton Church in relation to the surrounding area.

The British Geological Survey list the underlying geology of Aylton as Pridoli rocks (undifferentiated) - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone. These are overlain by slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.

Aylton church is a small church with nave and chancel in one, originally a chapel of ease, it no known dedication. It sits within a very small rectangular churchyard which has been extended to the north in the 20th century.

Aylton Church is a Grade II* Listed Building (English Heritage Building ID: 152673). The listing description is as follows:

Parish church. C12 with later alterations, restored 1928. Sandstone rubble in large squared blocks with sandstone dressings, rendered west gable top, two brick buttresses to west end, brick and timber porch, plain tiled roofs. Continuous small three-bay nave and two-bay chancel with south wall of chancel slightly set back at east end beyond stone buttress; south porch. Square, probably C17 bell-turret over west end of nave is rendered with pyramidal roof. Nave: west window is centrally placed C20 lancet above which is tiled weathering at eaves level; minute C12 round-headed windows in east side of north wall with a 2-light square-headed window opposite in the south wall.

C18 plaster sun-dial on west side of south wall. Chancel: C14 2-light east window with deep chamfers and ogee heads; small one-light square-head chamfered window in south wall. South porch: late C19 to C20 brick open side walls and front piers, two curved struts from tie of gable end to rafters with oak plaque on the struts showing date "165-" (1654 according to RCHM); C17 balusters, some restored, four to each open side, above the brick side walls, have run-out chamfer-stops to tops and bottoms which are narrower than the turned centres of each baluster. C18 south doorway with 2-centred head. Interior: plastered barrel ceiling to chancel and nave is divided by chancel screen, perhaps C15 and incorporating fragments of rood loft. The screen has three bays with the entrance bay left of centre, moulded posts; outer spandrels are traceried with daggers and cusped rosettes; inner spandrels are brattished; over the moulded lead rail is a range of trefoil-headed panels. To the east of the screen is a tie-beam with run-out chamfer-stops, possibly C17.

Small early C17 communion table with turned legs and c1700 communion rails with moulded rails and balusters. Late C19 harmonium inscribed "Bridgeport/Organ Co. Bridgeport/ Conn USA". Corbelled projection to left of altar. Small drainless piscina to south wall.

Nave: cambered tie-beam with keel moulding and run-out chamfer spans from above the south door. Font, perhaps C17, with plain hemi-spherical bowl and projecting rim on columnar shaft and octagonal base. Restored timber supports to bell-turret. (RCHM, Vol II, p 8-9).

Fieldwork

Site work took place on 9th and 10th January 2017. The works comprised the excavation of a drainage run along the outside of the North wall of the church and its continuation through the eastern boundary of the present churchyard into an existing ditch. The works were required in order to update and improve the drainage of roof water from the church and link the existing, but blocked, drainage run to a manhole and associated chamber next to the road. These works in part comprised a direct replacement of a concrete and ceramic pipe drain which had become blocked and was no longer serviceable. The works were carried out by mini-digger. A trench approximately 0.35m wide was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m.

It rapidly became apparent that the required depth for the new drainage run could be achieved by removing the concrete gully which ran the entire length of the north wall. This terminated in a square drain hopper which was, in turn, connected to a series of 4" diameter terracotta pipes which took the water out of the churchyard. It is unclear to what extent the water was then piped away from the churchyard towards the road.



Figure 2: Extract from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1887



Figure 3: Plan of Aylton Church and churchyard, the drainage run is highlighted as the dashed red line.



Plate 1: The eastern end of the church and its eastern boundary.



Plate 2: Drainage trench along north wall of Aylton Church, replacing concrete gutter.



Plate 3: Detail of disturbed ground at the base of the drainage run.



Plate 4: Drainage run at the north east corner of the church.



Plate 5: Drainage run at the north east corner of the church looking east showing finished depth.



Plate 6: Drainage run from the north east corner of the church looking west from the junction into the existing drain. The old pipes from the old drain are visible at the bottom centre of the photograph.

Conclusions

No features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological or historical significance were encountered during these works. This is largely due to the relatively shallow nature of the works and the re-use of an existing drainage run. The works did however confirm that there was no boundary wall along the eastern side of the churchyard.

Site Archive

20 digital photographs
1 site notebook entry
This document

Acknowledgements

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