

Aylton Church, Herefordshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief for Drainage and Lightning Conductor Works.



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Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 368

Herefordshire Archaeology
Economy, Communities and Corporate Directorate
Herefordshire Council



**NGR: SO 658 377
EHE: 51675**

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Summary:

An archaeological watch brief was required to monitor drainage and lightning conductor 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 existing drainage runs.

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 51675), 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 to record any remains of archaeological and historical importance revealed and / or disturbed by drainage and the provision for an extension to the existing conductor. Due to the upgraded drainage, an extension to the lightning conductor was required to be installed at a distance from the north-western corner of the church.

Historic buildings were not constructed with lightning protection in mind. The threat of a lightning strike and the damage this natural phenomenon can cause to churches is a grave concern, as demonstrated by Eastern Maudit Church, Northamptonshire (Donlan 1997). The provision of a lightning conductor system does not prevent the occurrence of a lightning strike, rather the purpose is to direct the current discharged from the strike to the earth safely – protecting both the structure and any occupants inside. The installation of a lightning conductor system is a necessary part of the risk assessment strategy to protect the building for future generations to enjoy and to reduce possible claims cost in the long term (Historic England).

The fieldwork comprised the recording by photographic record of the two drainage runs and the recording of the excavation for installation of the lightning conductor.

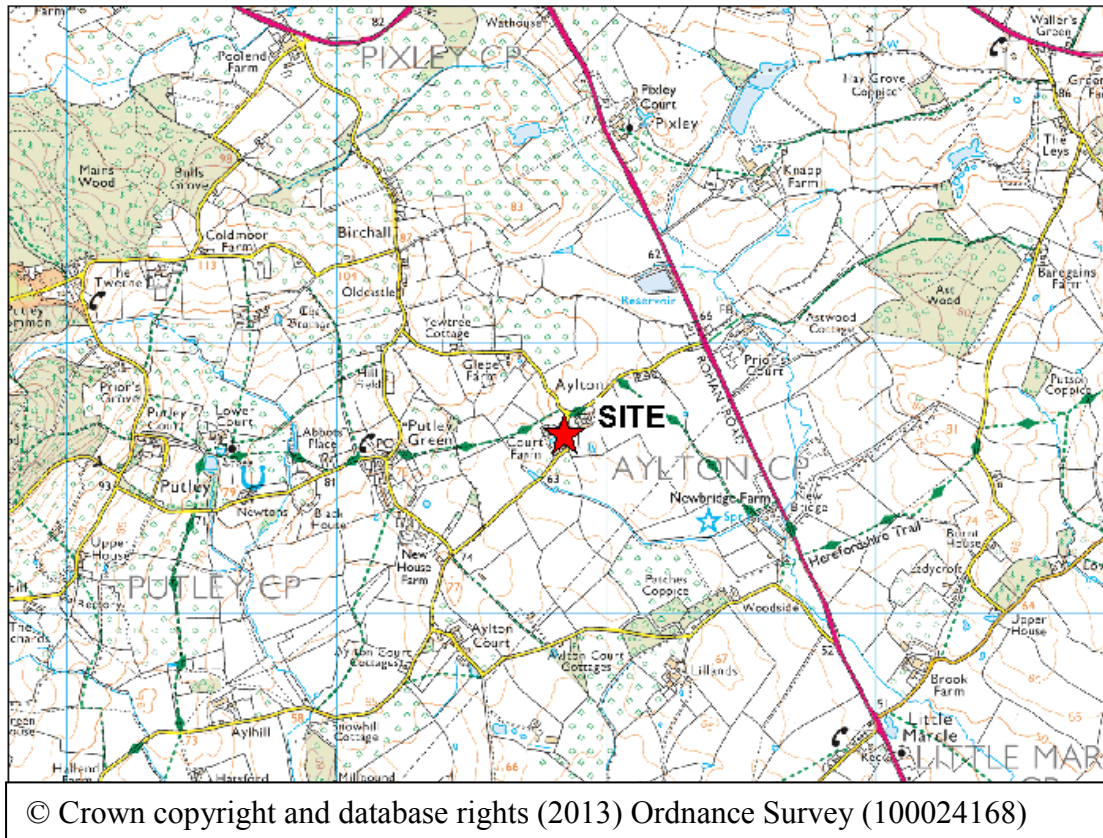


Figure 1: Site location of Aylton Church in relation to the surrounding area.

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 has 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 Thursday the 16th of March 2017. Herefordshire Archaeology observed and recorded by photographic record the excavation of two drainage trenches and a trench to take the replacement lightning conductor

The first trench, (Trench 1), was situated along the outside of the South wall of the church on its west side directly parallel to the entrance of the church (see figure 3 and Plate 1). The trench was opened in order to ascertain and remove a blockage within the existing drain. The trench was T shaped with a maximum width of 0.50m and 0.23m at its thinnest point. The trench was approximately 0.99m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.35m. No archaeologically significant finds were encountered during the excavation of this trench.

Trench 2 consisted of a drainage run along the outside of the South wall of the church from the porch towards the south-eastern corner of the church, (see figure 3 and Plate 2). The works were required in order to update and improve the drainage of roof water from the church into the existing soak away pipe. 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 aim here is to replace the existing concrete drainage with plastic pipes which are easier to maintain and update. The works were carried out by hand. Trench 2 was approximately 2.90m long and 0.32m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.20m. No archaeologically significant finds were encountered during the excavation of this trench.

Trench 3 ran from the north-western corner of the church northwards, (see figure 3 and Plates 3 and 4). The location of the trench provided the most direct and least visually intrusive route for the lightning protection system to be installed. Trench 3 was approximately 2.60m long and 0.18m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.40m. The location and procedure adheres to Historic England policy that seeks to minimise any damage to the historic fabric of the building and observes the principles of minimum intervention and reversibility where possible (Historic England, nd). No archaeologically significant finds were encountered during the excavation of this trench. A cut feature was observed within the trench at approximately 0.94m along on the east side. The feature was square in shape and measured 0.20m wide and 0.29m deep. The feature was a slightly different colour to the surrounding acidic loamy soil, it was a light pink/orange in colour and was cut from immediately below the turf suggesting that this feature is relatively modern, probably connected to building work within the last 20 years.



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

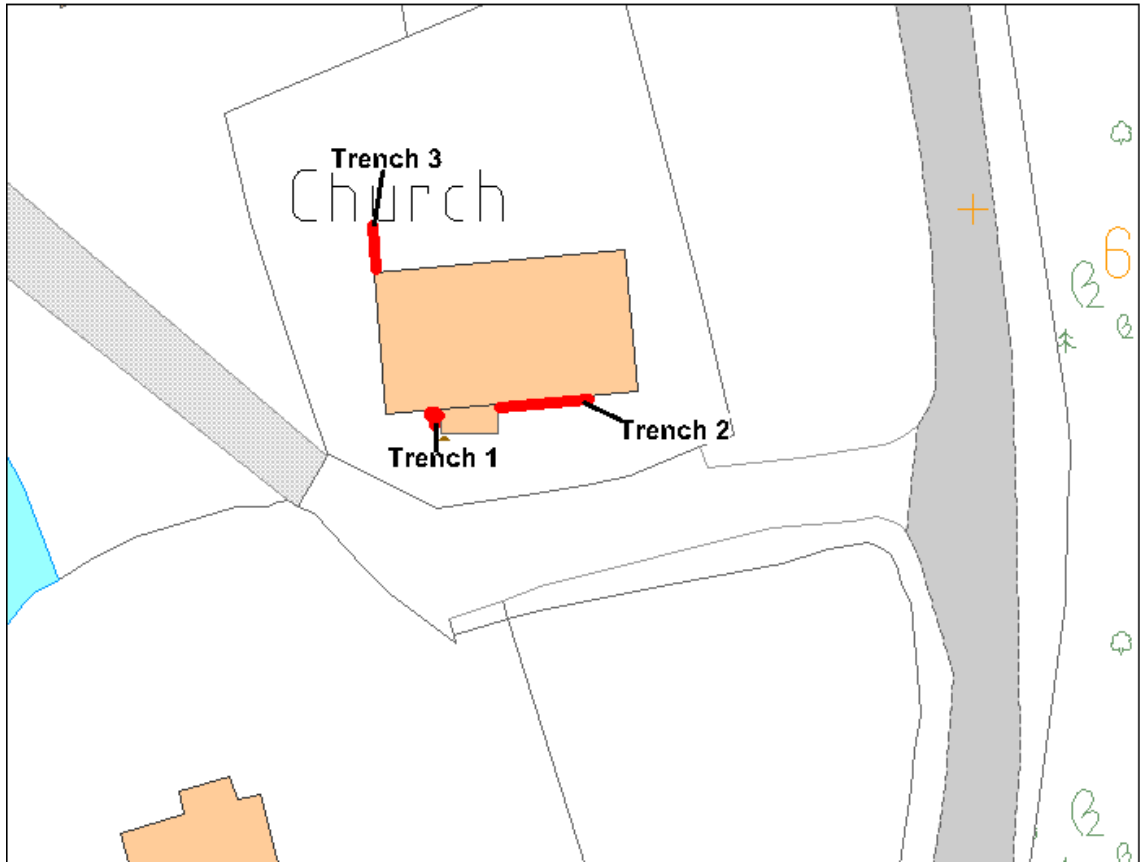


Figure 3: Plan of Aylton Church and churchyard showing the extent and locations of the trenches.



Plate 1: Trench 1 showing its location in relation to the southern wall of the church and the western wall of the porch..



Plate 2: Trench 2 looking west.



Plate 3: Trench 3 looking south.



Plate 4: Trench 3 looking east.

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 runs.

Site Archive

10 digital photographs
1 site notebook entry
This document

Acknowledgements

Herefordshire Archaeology would like to thank, Alan Birkett, Graham and Anne Blandford and Alan and Simon Taylor.