

ST MARY AND ST
MARGARET'S CHURCH,
CASTLE BROMWICH

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION,
2009

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St Mary and St Margaret's Church, Castle Bromwich

Solihull, West Midlands

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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for

Diocese of Birmingham

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St Mary and St Margaret's Church, Castle Bromwich
Archaeological Evaluation, June 2009

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St Mary and St Margaret's Church, Castle Bromwich

Archaeological Evaluation 2009

SUMMARY

Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by St Mary and St Margaret's Church Castle Bromwich to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of a proposed development at St Mary and St Margaret's church, Castle Bromwich, sited on NGR 414172, 289888. The evaluation took place in September 2009 and involved the excavation of two trenches.

The two trenches were located within the footprint of a proposed extension at the south end of the church. No evidence of an earlier chapel structure or burials was identified. A brick-lined drain was exposed possibly dating to the 17th century, suggesting activity on site that pre-dated the 18th century remodelling of St Mary and St Margaret's church. No finds were recovered from the site.

St Mary and St Margaret's Church, Castle Bromwich

Archaeological Evaluation, September 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1. Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned by St Mary and St Margaret's Church Castle Bromwich to carry out an archaeological evaluation within the churchyard of St Mary and St Margaret's church, Castle Bromwich, in advance of a proposed development.
- 1.1.2. This report outlines the results of an evaluation carried out in September 2009. It has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance Notes for Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Briefs (IFA 2001).
- 1.1.3. The evaluation conformed to a brief prepared by Mike Hodder, the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2009, Appendix 1), which was approved by the Diocesan Archaeologist in accordance with the terms of the brief.

2. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1.1. The site is located within the churchyard of St Mary and St Margaret's church, Castle Bromwich (centred on NGR SP 414172, 289888; Fig. 1). Castle Bromwich is a suburb situated within the northern part of the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull in the West Midlands. The church lies to the west of the village, and to the north of the Jacobean Castle Bromwich Hall.
- 2.1.2. The underlying geology consists of glaciofluvial sands and gravels over Mercia Mudstone.
- 2.1.3. At present the site is occupied by a wooden toilet block which links a 1960's brick built extension with the south door of the church. The surrounding area is a level lawn with a large holly tree to the south of the brick structure and a large ditch to the west of the proposed development.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1. From the Norman Conquest, Castle Bromwich was a sub-manor of Aston under the overlordship of Dudley. It was held initially by a follower of Ansculf of Picquiny, himself a lieutenant of William the Conqueror. Sometime during the next century the family acquired the surname de Bromwich. The manor passed by marriage to the Ferrers family of Chartley c1345 and again by marriage to the Devereux family one of whom eventually became Earl of Essex. It was Sir Edward Devereux who built Castle Bromwich Hall on the present site in 1599.
- 3.1.2. Sir Orlando Bridgeman bought the manor in 1657 for his son, Sir John Bridgeman I whose son, Sir John Bridgeman II inherited in 1710 and subsequently extended and improved the hall. The Bridgemans were created the Barons Bradford in 1792 and the Earls of Bradford in 1815. The sixth earl is the current lord of the manor. The arms in the present church bear the Red Hand of Ulster indicating the purchase of the baronetcy from James I in 1611 (Dargue & Adams 2004).
- 3.1.3. The importance to this church of the succession of lords of the manor is that, until 1878 this was not a parish church, but the private chapel of the manorial lords. It is

likely that the original Norman chapel was built for one of the de Bromwich family, and extended by a Devereux during the 1400s. The church was then rebuilt 1726 - 1731 by Sir John Bridgeman II. The present Lord Bradford is still the patron of the living.

- 3.1.4. St Mary and St Margaret's Church first comes into the record books over 800 years ago when it appears in documentary evidence of 1165. This was a charter recording the granting of Castle Bromwich by the de Peynel family to Tickford Priory. Another document of 1175 mentions a Norman chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary at Castle Bromwich (Dargue & Adams 2004).
- 3.1.5. There is a further reference in a document by William of Berwood in 1301. As part of a land transfer the recipient is required to
- 'sustain annually a wax light and torch burning before the altar of the Blessed Virgin in the Chapel of Wodybromwig all the year when other wax lights and torches are lighted in the said Chapel.'
- 3.1.6. This is likely to have been the private chapel of the lord of the manor and subject to the parish church at Aston. It is not known when this chapel was first established, nor indeed with complete certainty where it was. The chapel of a large hall may have been a room within the house, or a small building attached to it. However, there is credible evidence that the Norman chapel is the site of our present chancel and that the high altar of the church still stands in the same place that it has stood for nearly a thousand years. And it is almost certain that parts of a Norman church survive within the 18th-century brickwork (Dargue & Adams 2004).
- 3.1.7. At the end of the 19th century the dimensions of the church were investigated by a local architect, Charles Bateman. Bateman's curiosity led him to remove part of the wooden dado panelling in the chancel. Revealed behind the woodwork was a wall of stone. Bateman described in 1893 as having seen on this wall the evidence of painted plasterwork, anathema to the 18th-century mind and a sure clue to the church's medieval origin (Dargue & Adams 2004).
- 3.1.8. Records show the chapel was remade of stone in the 12th century, possibly earlier. The 15th century saw the construction of a large half timbered structure containing a nave of five bays with aisles and a chancel. During the 16th century the building was enlarged by the addition of another bay and a bell turret. The present church was extensively altered between 1726 and 1731 by Sir John Bridgeman II to give an English Renaissance, neo-classical, style. The medieval nave was retained and enclosed within the plaster-work. The incorporation of the nave into the new design meant the retention of the wooden pillars and large medieval roof. The reconstruction was probably designed by the architect Thomas White of Worcester. The new brick tower was built first in 1725, a little way away from the existing main church.
- 3.1.9. Inside, the church has two side chapels (one is called the Lady Chapel) and traditional wooden pews. The box pews at the front were originally reserved for the Bridgeman family. There is a stone tablet with an epitaph to Sir John Bridgeman of 1752 and a window dedicated to the memory of the Countess of Bradford who died in 1842. There is a rare three tiered pulpit with a sounding board above. It has a high pulpit, a reading desk and a seat for the clerk. The Foden Room (named after one of the Churchwardens) was also built in ordinary brick on the south side to give additional accommodation.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1.1. The principal aim of the evaluation was to determine the character, extent, date, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.
- 4.1.2. More specific objectives were to:
- Identify any evidence of the earlier chapel
 - Identify any graves within the development area

5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1.1. Two trenches were excavated across the site each measuring 6m in length and 2m in width (Fig. 1)
- 5.1.2. The trial-trenches were surveyed in using appropriate survey instruments and located on the Ordnance Survey National Grid.
- 5.1.3. All topsoil and modern overburden was removed using a mini-excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision, down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon or the subsoil. Subsequent cleaning was by hand.
- 5.1.4. Two sondages were excavated by hand within Trench 1 in order to further evaluate the potential presence of archaeological deposits. These measured 1.8m long by 0.7m wide and 1m long wide respectively.
- 5.1.5. Further details can be found within the Written Scheme of Investigation (Appendix 1)

6. RESULTS

6.1. Trench 1

- 6.1.1. Trench 1 (Fig. 2, Plate 1) measured 6m in length by 2m in width and was broadly aligned east-west.
- 6.1.2. Orange-red sandy gravel natural subsoil (1002), was encountered at a depth of 0.50m and was overlain by light yellow-brown silty sandy gravel subsoil (1001) 0.32m deep. The subsoil was cut by a northeast-southwest aligned linear brick-lined drain, up to 0.40m wide (1003), which ran the length of the excavated trench. This feature was sealed by mid-brown sandy silt topsoil (1000).
- 6.1.3. Given the size and typology of the bricks found lining the drain the origins of this feature most probably dates to the 17th century (Chris Hewitson, Birmingham Archaeology, pers. comm.).

6.2. Trench 2

- 6.2.1. Trench 2 (Fig. 2, Plate 2) aligned broadly east-west and north-south, was L-shaped and had an overall measurement of 6m in length by 2m wide.
- 6.2.2. The natural subsoil 2002, orange-red sandy gravel, was encountered at a depth of 0.54m. This was overlain by red-brown sandy silt subsoil 0.34m deep (2001), which in turn, was sealed by mid-brown sandy silt topsoil, 0.20m deep (2000).

6.2.3. No archaeological features or remains were observed during the excavation of Trench 2.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1.1. The evaluation found no evidence of earlier chapel structures or burials within the areas excavated. The brick-lined drain provided evidence of activity pre-dating the early eighteenth century reconstruction of the church which suggests that other features of a similar date may be present within the development area. A watching brief during the proposed groundworks will allow preservation by record of any such features which are encountered during the construction.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by the St Mary and St Margaret's Church, Castle Bromwich. Thanks also go to Mike Hodder, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, who monitored the project on behalf of the Birmingham Diocese and to Gavin Douglas for his helpful support. Work on site was undertaken by Dharminder Chuhan, Kristina Krawiec and Erica Macey-Bracken. Mark Charles produced the written report which was illustrated by Nigel Dodds and edited by Kevin Colls who also managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

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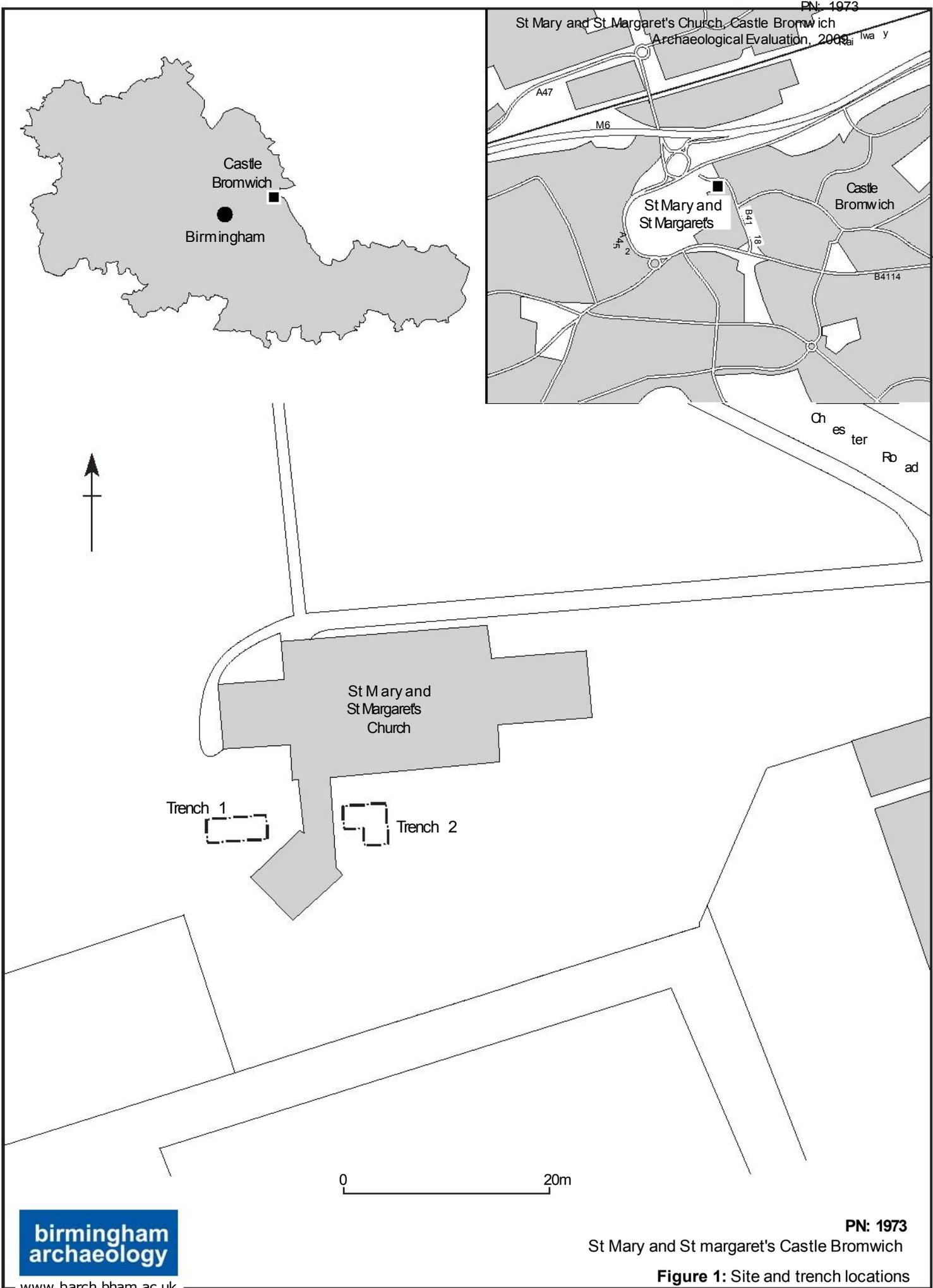
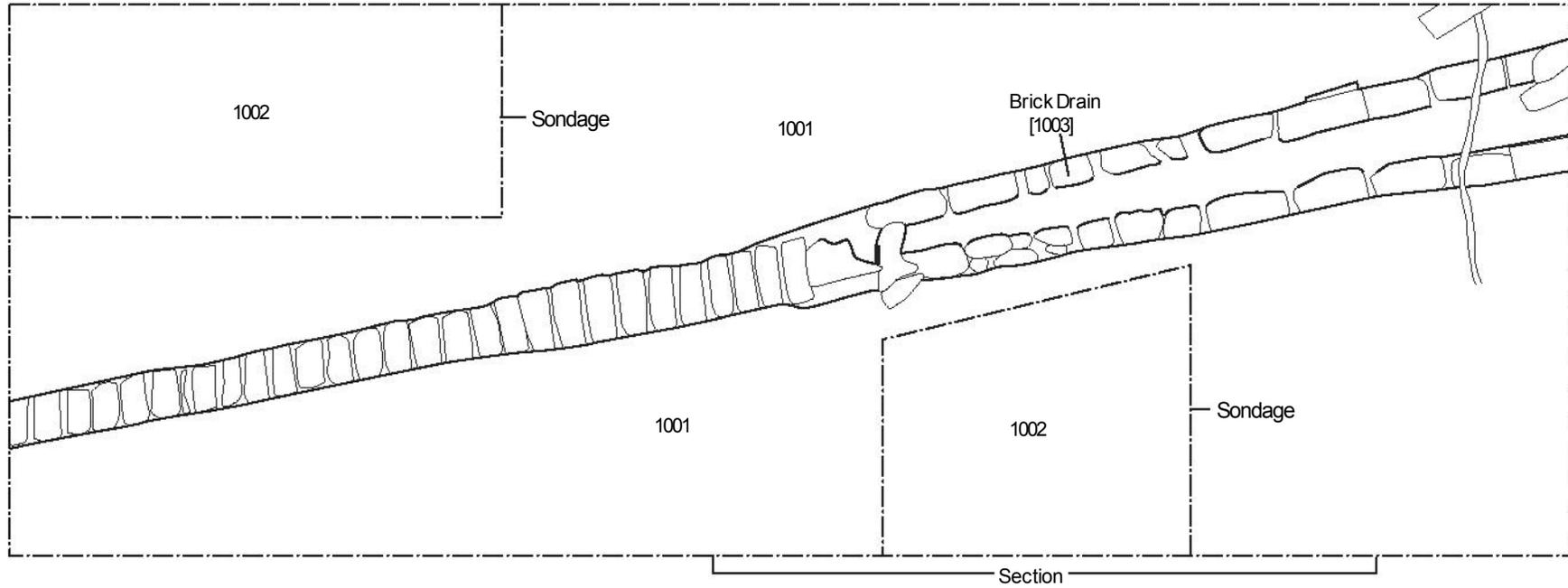


Figure 1: Site and trench locations

Trench 1



E W

Trench 2

