

WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Alterations to:
**Hadleigh Baptist Church,
George Street,
Hadleigh**

SMR ref. HAD 073

Application Number B/01/01449/FUL

NGR: TM 0281 4255

Introduction

Proposed alterations to Hadleigh Baptist Church were subject to a standard Watching Brief condition. The work would entail the construction of an extension and other internal alterations. Figure 1 (below) indicates the location of the Baptist Church.

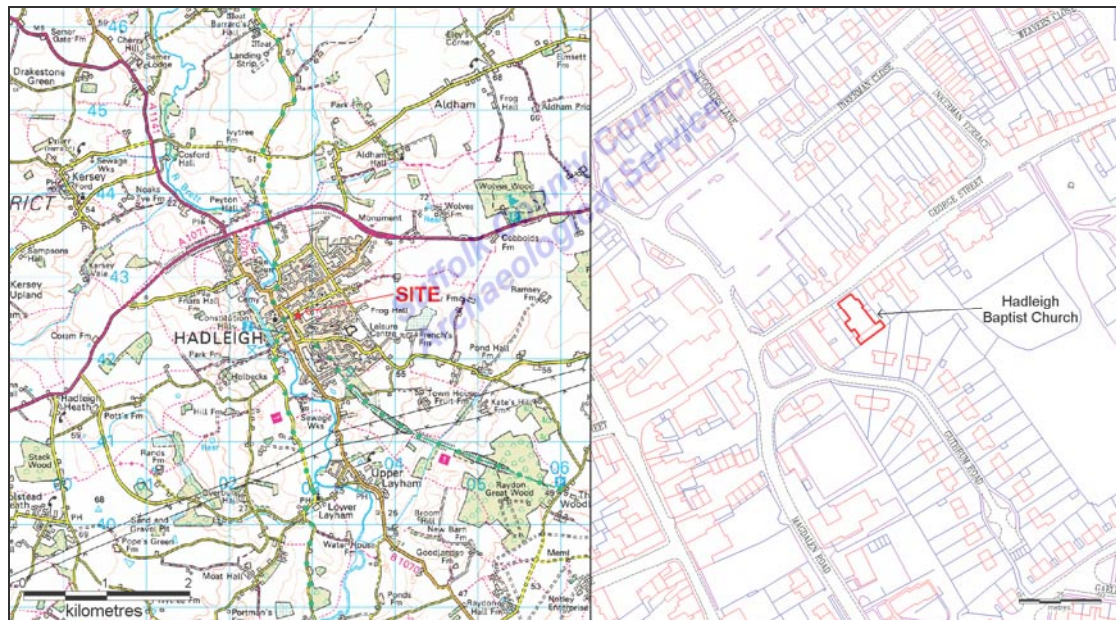


Figure 1: Site Location

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Results

The site was visited on the 12th May 2004 in order to inspect the excavation of a large hole within the existing building for the purpose of constructing a baptismal pool. The visit was in response to a call from the on-site contractors who reported having uncovered some brick walls under the floor of the church. At the time of the visit part of the wooden floor within the chapel area of the church had been lifted to reveal a loose earth surface beneath within which the very top of a series of brick walls could be seen. It was initially thought these were dwarf walls constructed to support the main joists of the wooden floor but upon closer examination it was found that they formed the lining of what appeared to be a rectangular shaped pit situated along the central northwest-southeast axis of the church, but slightly towards its southeast end (see figure 2). At the time of the visit the contractors had excavated adjacent the southwest outer edge of the pit to a depth of c.1.65m. The revealed soil profile

indicated that the natural subsoil, which consisted of a yellow sandy clay, occurred at a depth of c.0.80m. It was overlain by a c.0.25m thick layer of dark brown silty sand, which was in turn overlain by a paler brown silty sand containing occasional fragments of post-medieval brick and tile. No other archaeological features or deposits were identified. The resultant spoil was also examined but no significant artefacts were recovered.

A second visit was made on the 13th May 2004 to observe further excavations within the church. The hole seen the previous day had been enlarged, cutting away much of the previously seen brickwork to reveal a cross section across the width of the pit and exposing the inner face of its northeast wall. The brick lined pit had an internal width of 1.6m and initially a depth of 1.34m. The internal faces of the brickwork were lined with a very hard cement render. At a later stage the floor of this feature had been raised through the addition of two courses of bricks laid end to end on their narrow sides, these too were then sealed under a hard cement render. This reduced the depth of the pit to 1.05m.

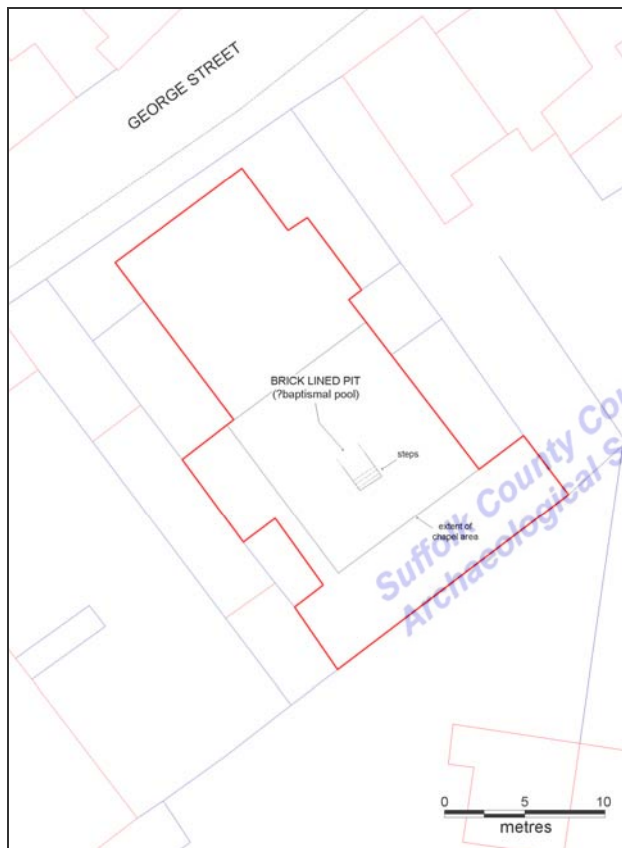


figure 2: location of pool within church

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At the southeast end of the pit three steps were formed in brickwork although this was later reduced to two steps by the raising of the floor. The pit was completely filled so that it was flush with the surrounding ground surface with two distinct fills. The lower fill

comprised of a pale brown loam with numerous fragments of post-medieval brick and tile whilst the upper fill comprised a dark brown loam containing a large amount of near complete bricks and other rubble which was mostly situated towards the bottom of this layer. It could be clearly seen that the pit continued towards the northwest but it was not possible to assess its entire length. Plates I, II and III depict the excavation of the above feature.

No further visits to the site were undertaken.

Conclusions

No significant archaeological deposits appear to have been damaged or destroyed by the observed excavations.



The brick lined pit is undoubtedly the remains of an earlier baptismal pool for use in ceremonies at the church and possibly dates from the original construction of the church in 1830 (as indicated by a stone set in former front wall). The hard cement rendering on the internal faces are presumably to make it water tight. The relining of the pool through the addition of extra brickwork at its base could have been in response to a leak, or to strengthen the base as a precaution against leaks as the weight of the water could have led to localised subsidence and deformation of the base. Alternatively, its purpose may have been simply to reduce the depth of the pool.

M. Sommers
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Field Projects Team

20th August 2004



Plate I

The outer face of the southwest wall of the pool revealed on the 12th May 2004



Plate II

Cross-section across the width of the pool



Plate III

View illustrating the internal face of the northeast wall and the three steps