



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Attendance,
Inspection and Recording Exercise
(Watching Brief) at
St. Denys Church, Church Road,
Evington, Leicester.**

NGR: SK 62759 02764

Andrew Hyam



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An Archaeological Attendance, Inspection and Recording

Exercise (watching brief) at

St. Denys Church, Church Road,

Evington, Leicester

NGR: SK 62759 02764

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Summary

An archaeological attendance, inspection and recording exercise (watching brief) was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at St. Denys Church, Church Road, Evington, Leicester. The work took place between the 14th and 17th of May 2013 during the excavation of foundation trenches for a proposed new single storey Vestry extension on the south side of the church. Foundation trenches up to 1.5m in depth were excavated around and across the footprint of the extension.

No archaeological features or deposits were seen during the work.

The fieldwork was carried out by A.R. Hyam. The archive will be deposited with Leicester Museums Service under Accession Number A8.2013

Introduction

In accordance with NPPF (section 12 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment) this document forms the report for an archaeological attendance, inspection and recording (watching brief) at St. Denys Church, Church Road, Evington, Leicester. Planning permission has been granted to demolish an existing Vestry extension and build one with a larger footprint in its place. A DAC certificate also covers this work.

When considering the proposed development work the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor recommended the requirement for an archaeological watching brief to take place due to the potential for exposing archaeological features and deposits and the site's location within an area of archaeological interest. The work has been commissioned by W. Roe and followed that specified in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Attendance, Inspection and Recording (watching brief) at St Denys Church, Church Road, Evington, Leicester* (ULAS 23.12.2012 – hereinafter the WSI).

Background

Although Evington used to be a small village, for much of the latter 20th century it has formed part of Leicester's eastern suburbs. The former village centre lies approximately 4 km to the east of Leicester city centre (Fig. 1). St Denys Church is located at the southern end of Church Road near to its junction with Stoughton Lane and Shady Lane and is centred on National Grid Reference SK 62759 02764 (Fig. 2).

To the west of the church yard is a Scheduled Monument comprising a well-preserved moated site with fishponds (SM Ref. **1010686**).

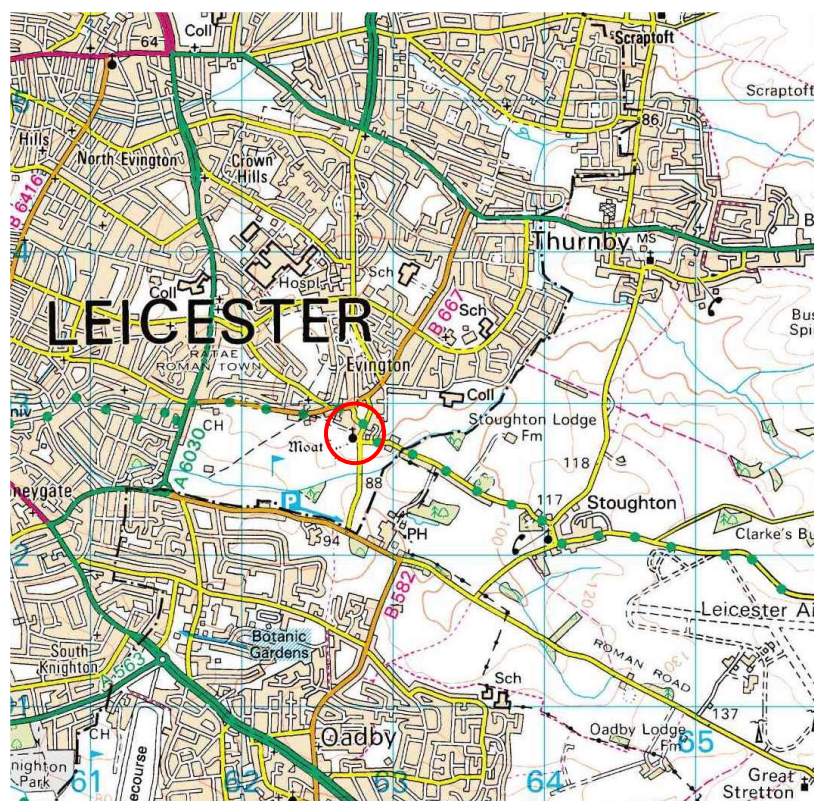


Figure 1 Evington location

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The parish church of St Denys is a Grade II* listed building (Listed Building ref. **188620**). According to the St Denys Church website, the oldest parts of the church date to around 1200 when construction first began. This building, of which only the tower remains, was dedicated to St Denys in 1219 by the Bishop of Lincoln. The south aisle was built in the early 1300s with the north aisle being added soon after in 1349. The church was extensively restored in 1869 by Goddard. In 1957/58 the Clergy and Choir Vestries were added as a separate building which was accessed via a doorway in the south aisle. It is this building which has recently been demolished to make way for the proposed development

The First Edition Ordnance Survey County Series map of 1888 shows the present layout of the church buildings. All subsequent editions show the same layout up to and including the 1954 edition. The next available edition is in 1971 when the Vestry extension has appeared.



Figure 2 St. Denys Church Vestry location
Map supplied by client

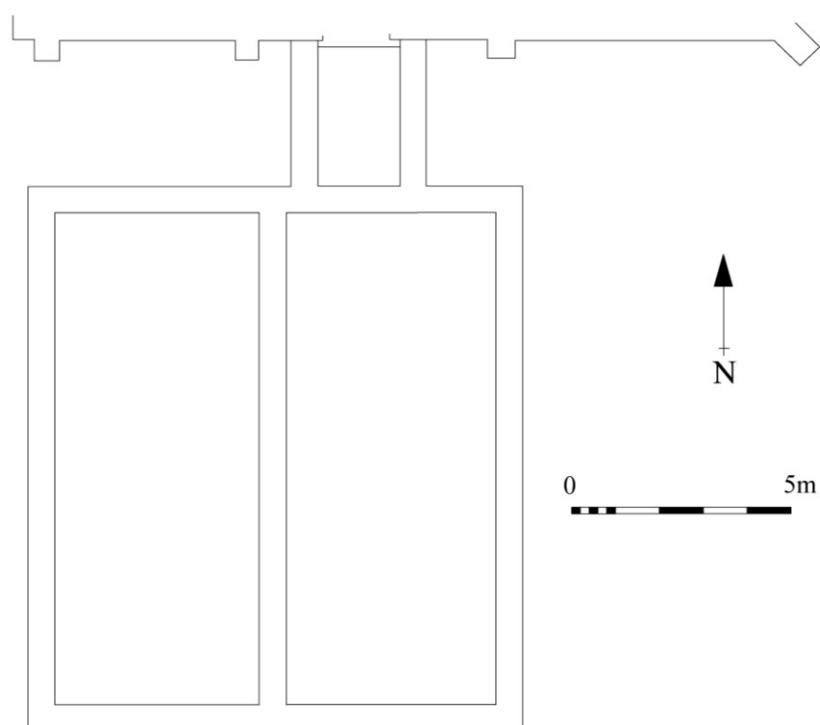


Figure 3 Layout of foundation trenches

The British Geological Survey indicates that the geology of the area comprises Blue Lias Formation Mudstone overlain with Wigston Member Sand And Gravel deposits (1).

The area around the proposed new Vestry, prior to the commencement of the work, comprised an open space covered in turf. A disturbed area of ground shows where the earlier Vestry building once stood but nothing remains in-situ (Fig. 4). The land is generally level but tends to drop away to the south along the southern edge of the development area. Beyond the south and western boundaries of the churchyard the land drops away towards the Evington Arboretum and to the site of the moat earthworks.



Figure 4 Site prior to levelling and trench excavation
Looking north-east

Objectives

In addition to the research aims specified in the ULAS WSI the general objectives were as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits or earlier building remains.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits/ structural evidence to be affected by the proposed works.
- To record any archaeological deposits/ structural evidence to be affected by the works.
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Methodology

A mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket on the back actor was used to reduce the site down to formation level. A 0.6m wide toothless bucket was then used to excavate the foundations around the footprint of the proposed Vestry. The final trench depth varied between 1.2 and 1.5 metres.

Topsoil/modern overburden was removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the top of any archaeological deposits or to the building foundation level, whichever was first. The foundation trench was then excavated down to the required depth. All spoil was scanned for finds and other artefacts, any disturbed human bones were recovered for later burial elsewhere within the churchyard.

The foundation trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any deposits located would be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand. All plans would also be tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Sections of any excavated archaeological features would be drawn at an appropriate scale. The foundation trenches were recorded on standard ULAS pro-forma watching brief recording sheets noting soil depths and descriptions. Any drawn sections of archaeological features would be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum.

All trenches were recorded by notes, sketches and both digital colour and 35mm black and white photographs. The recording methodology followed that specified in the ULAS WSI. All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2006) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological watching briefs* (2008).

Results

In order to create a level site at the correct building height all of the turf was removed across the entire footprint of the new extension. Approximately 0.3m of turf and dark brown silty topsoil was removed across the northern side of the development, reducing down to less than 0.1m along the southern edge as the slope of the site increased. This levelling strip revealed a consistent, but mixed, mid-brown sandy-silt containing some building material and disarticulated human bone (Fig. 5). The ground to the south of the earlier Vestry was quite heavily disturbed by root action.



Figure 5 Site reduction phase
Looking north-west

Once the correct levels had been achieved, the foundation trenches were then excavated. Two short trenches were excavated extending out from the southern wall of the church where a small corridor connecting the Vestry to the main church building will be located. With the exception of a north to south disused pipe the mixed mid-brown sandy-silt layer continued down to a depth of approximately 1m before the mid-orange brown sand and gravel natural substratum was encountered. Excavation of the remaining trenches around the perimeter and across the centre of the new building revealed similar results (Figs. 6 and 7). All of the foundation trenches, with the exception of the easternmost trench were observed and inspected. Areas of disturbed bones were seen across the site which suggested earlier disturbance and re-interment during the digging of new graves.

The natural substratum remained at a fairly constant 1m below current ground level across the site. The relatively shallow foundations for the old Vestry building appeared to be only around 0.5m below current ground level. Although clearly, and heavily, disturbed the mid-brown sandy-silt layer did not contain any archaeological features or deposits.



Figure 6 Site after western trench excavation
Looking north



Figure 7 Site after excavation of trenches
Looking south-east

Discussion

Despite the proximity to the Scheduled Monument earthworks and its position within the heart of the village core no archaeological features or deposits were encountered during this watching brief. If any were present it seems highly likely that they may have been disturbed and destroyed by continual and repeated grave digging.

Archive

The archive consists of:

This report,

3 pro forma watching brief forms,

1 record sheet combined for both digital and 35mm black and white photographs,

1 contact sheet of 24 digital photographs,

1 contact sheet for 5 35mm black and white photographs plus negatives,

1 cd of digital photographs.

Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

Bibliography

Brown, D. 2008 *Standard and Guidance for the Preparation of Archaeological Archives* (Institute for Archaeologists).

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Appendix 1 OASIS Information

Project Name	St Denys Church, Church Road, Evington, Leicester
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	V Score
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	None
Current Land Use	Churchyard
Development Type	New church building
Reason for Investigation	Required by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor
Position in the Planning Process	Ongoing
Site Co ordinates	SK 62759 02764
Start/end dates of field work	14.05.2013 – 17.05.2013
Archive Recipient	Leicester Museums
Study Area	150m ²

Appendix 2 Digital photographs



A8 2013 (1).JPG



A8 2013 (2).JPG



A8 2013 (3).JPG



A8 2013 (4).JPG



A8 2013 (5).JPG



A8 2013 (6).JPG



A8 2013 (7).JPG



A8 2013 (8).JPG



A8 2013 (9).JPG



A8 2013 (10).JPG



A8 2013 (11).JPG



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A8 2013 (13).JPG



A8 2013 (14).JPG



A8 2013 (15).JPG



A8 2013 (16).jpg



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A8 2013 (18).JPG



A8 2013 (19).JPG



A8 2013 (20).JPG



A8 2013 (21).jpg



A8 2013 (22).JPG



A8 2013 (23).JPG



A8 2013 (24).JPG

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