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Archaeological Services

**Archaeological Attendance, Inspection and Recording
at the Church of St. Simon and St. Jude
Church Street/Almeys Lane,
Earl Shilton, Leicestershire,
NGR SP 4711 9819**

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Archaeological Attendance, Inspection and Recording (Watching Brief) at the Church of St. Simon and St. Jude, Church St, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire NGR SP 4711 9819

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Archaeological Attendance, Inspection and Recording (Watching Brief) at the Church of St. Simon and St. Jude, Church St, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire (NGR SP 47119 98197)

Jennifer Browning

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for new drainage prior to installation of a new kitchen and disabled toilet at the Church of St. Simon and St. Jude, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire NGR SP47119 98197. No archaeologically significant finds or evidence for earlier structures were encountered during the course of the watching brief. The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the Accession Number X. A41.2014.

1. Introduction

This report presents the results of archaeological attendance, inspection and recording (watching brief) carried out at the Church of St. Simon and St. Jude, Earl Shilton, in March 2014 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services during groundworks for the creation of a new kitchen area, disabled toilet and associated drainage.

St. Simon and St. Jude's Church is a Grade II* listed building (**Building ID 188150**), rebuilt in 1855-6 by Slater and Carpenter, except for the west tower, which dates from the 15th century. The rebuilt church followed the pattern of the earlier building.

The church lies immediately to the east of a Scheduled Monument, Earl Shilton motte and bailey castle. An archaeological watching brief was requested by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor as there is a possibility that buried archaeological remains exist within the area. The DAC certificate contains a condition for archaeological work in respect of the groundworks associated with the creation of a disabled access WC.

2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

The Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the underlying geology consists of Edwalton Member Mudstone overlain with superficial deposits of Wigston Member Sand and Gravels (Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain).



Figure 1: Location plan

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3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The place-name Earl Shilton was originally Shilton, meaning 'farmstead on a shelf or ledge', and the Earl was an Affix from its early possession by the Earls of Leicester (Mills 1998). It is first recorded in Domesday Book when land was held there by Hugh of Grandmesnil. A priest and mill are also mentioned. Earl Shilton was part of the lands which was forfeit by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, after his death at the Battle of Evesham in 1265.

The church of St. Simon & St. Jude is a Grade II* listed building (**Building ID: 188150**). The building is a parish church rebuilt in 1855-6 by Slater and Carpenter except for the 15th century west tower. The church replaced a medieval building which was originally a chapelry of Kirby Mallory in the 13th century. It lies very close to the Scheduled Monument of Earl Shilton Motte and Bailey Castle (**MLE2849, SM 17035**), a large mound c.10' high, 120' diameter with an encircling ditch to the east of the church. There is no trace of a bailey but it may be perpetuated by the churchyard. The castle was probably built by the Earls of Leicester in the 12th century and served to guard the western approach to their hunting chase of Leicester Forest. It may have had only a relatively short period of use. In the 1950s it was adapted as a public park, and a miniature gateway was built with a 'drawbridge' across the moat. There are flower beds on the slope of the mound and a lawn on top. The church may lie in the castle bailey and may have originally been the castle chapel. Creighton (1999) says that

"the castle may have embraced the extant parish church within its defences, as such making a statement of conquest to the existing community.

An archaeological watching brief investigation was undertaken by ULAS in 2007 during the groundworks for the construction of a new footpath and entrance (Farnworth-Jones, Greg. 2008). Due to the limited depth of excavation, only limited archaeological results were achieved and the excavator's conclusions speculative. However, the possible cut for the ditch was observed, suggesting that during the medieval period the moat may have originally been much wider than it is presently. There is therefore the possibility that buried archaeological remains may be affected by the development.

4. Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological work was:

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

5. Methodology

The work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (Score 2013) and adhered to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev. 2010) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (rev. 2008).

The programme of work consisted of the excavation of drainage trenches from the church (tower and north aisle) to the trench arch drain located in the graveyard.

6. Results

The site was visited on 19th March 2014 during the groundworks for the new drainage trenches and trench arch drain. The sides of the trenches were inspected and the spoil heaps checked for artefacts. A trench, 0.25m wide, had been excavated from the west wall of the north aisle towards the north-west corner of the tower. The trench varied in depth, measuring 0.6m at its deepest point and 0.3m at its most shallow, close to the wall of the church where it exposed the foundations of the north aisle (Fig. 5). The topsoil consisted of dark brown clayey sand 0.15m thick, overlying reddish brown, slightly clayey sand with frequent medium sized rounded pebbles and occasional fragments of mortar, brick, tile and slate.

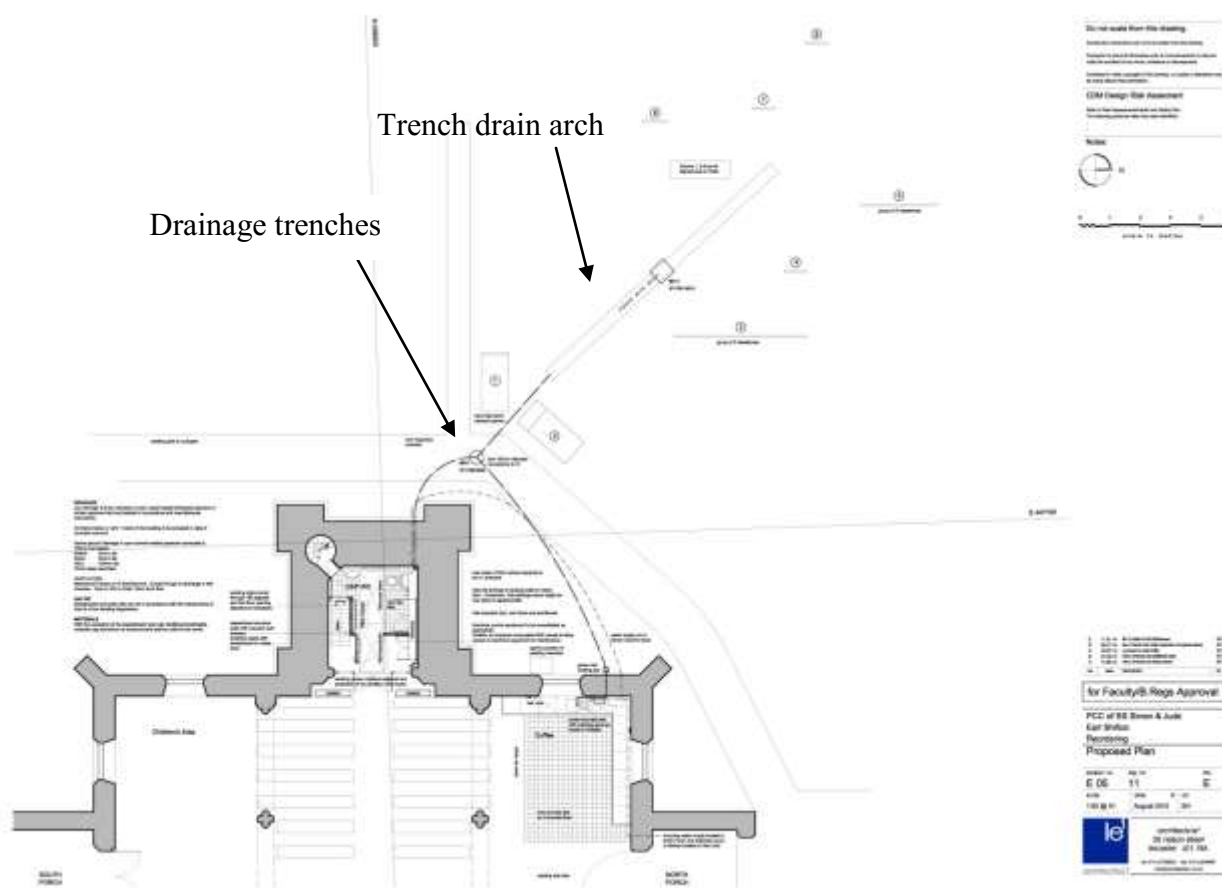


Figure 2: Plan of west end of church showing areas watched (plan supplied by client)

The foundations of the western wall of the tower were also exposed by the work (Figs 3-4). The tower is the only part of the church that was not rebuilt in the 19th century. However, the mortar and arrangement of the stones appeared different to the rest of the tower wall, more closely resembling the foundations of the north aisle. It is therefore possible that the tower was 'shored up' or underpinned during the rebuilding of the church or the 1874 restoration of the tower.

The drainage trench led away from the tower on a north-west alignment and was hand-excavated between the gravestones. The trench arch drain measured 0.85m wide and was approximately 12m long. It was excavated to a depth of 0.9m at the south-east end, becoming shallower towards the north-west end, where it was 0.65m deep. Topsoil, as previously described, overlay a fairly loosely compacted subsoil, consisting of reddish brown clayey

sand, with frequent rounded pebbles and occasional fragments of modern brick and tile. The topsoil was approximately 0.35m thick in this area, however the boundary between the topsoil and subsoil was quite diffuse in this area. No archaeological deposits were observed.



Figure 3: The western wall of the north aisle showing foundations



Figure 4: The exposed foundations of the tower wall, looking east



Figure 5: The section for the trench arch drain, looking south-west

7. Conclusions

No archaeological deposits, structures or finds were encountered during the course of this watching brief and perhaps surprisingly, no disarticulated human bones were observed in the subsoil. The foundations of the tower wall was also exposed.

8. Archive

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council HNET, with the Accession No. X. A41 2014.

The archive contains site notes (watching brief pro forma sheets), digital photographs and a photo index.

The report is listed on the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. Available at: <http://oasis.ac.uk/>

9. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* and *Rutland Record* in due course. The report has been added to the Archaeology Data Service's (ADS) Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York.

10. Bibliography

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