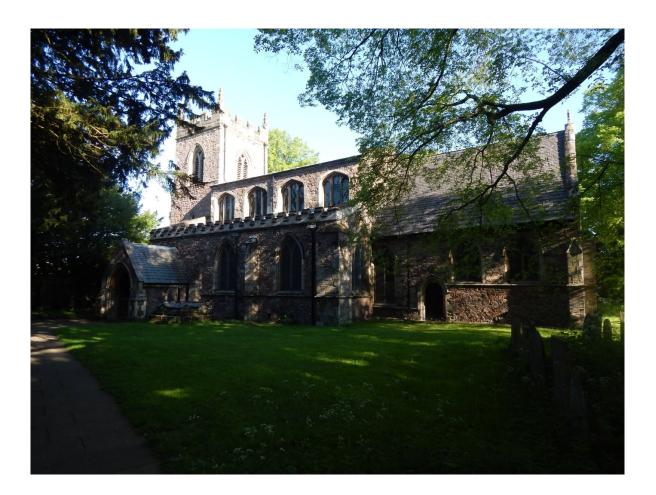


An archaeological field evaluation at All Saints' Church, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire (SK 603 136)

Leon Hunt



ULAS Report No 2016-090 ©2016 An archaeological field evaluation at All Saints' Church, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire (SK 603 136)

Leon Hunt

for Cossington PPC

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An archaeological field evaluation at All Saints' Church, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire (SK 603 136)

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Summary

An archaeological test-pit and trial trench evaluation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at All Saints' Church, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire (SK 603 136) in advance of the construction of a new meeting room at the church along with the replacement of the existing floor of the church.

These were excavated to assess what was beneath the tiled floor of the church and to test for the depth of undisturbed human burials within the churchyard.

This work was required to assess the impact of the new proposals after advice from *Historic England and the Diosesan Advisory Committee.*

A total of ten test pits and trenches were excavated. Six test pits were to be excavated within the church and four in the churchyard to the north of the church, between gravestones, large tree roots and services. The test pits within the church consisted of the examination of the Victorian under floor heating system by lifting the access grilles and slabs over the heating system. These allowed the heating system to be partially recorded but did not allow the examination of the tiled area of the church floor. Therefore three test pits were dug through the church floor including one in the centre of the church after the tiles had been removed. Two others were excavated in areas where the floor had collapsed.

Cobbles were located within the soil in one test pit close to the north wall, along with a sherd of 12th century pottery. Cobbles were discovered in situ within another along with 13th century pottery. It is unclear whether the cobbles were the remnants of a cobbled floor predating the Victorian tiled floor, or a cobbled yard or path predating the 13th century north aisle.

The test pits through the floor showed that the tiles overlay a sandy bedding layer, over a layer of crushed plaster hardcore over dark brown soil. Pottery and human bone were retrieved from the test pits. At the edge of all three test pits a low wall of brick or stone was identified that had been constructed to support the ends of the pews along the edge of the aisles.

The lifting of the access grilles and slab of the heating system below the floor afforded a brief examination of the heating system, which appeared to run down the north, and presumably, the south aisles, and under the floor of the west tower. The large pit at the eastern end of the north aisle, appeared to be deeper than the other spaces and was constructed of blue engineering bricks rather than the red bricks seen in the other spaces. More may be revealed of the old heating system during the removal of the existing floor.

The four trenches within the churchyard showed that disarticulated bone was encountered in all of the trenches at around 0.68m-0.80m, and articulated remains were revealed at 0.88m depth in one trench.

Introduction

An archaeological test-pit evaluation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at All Saints' Church, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire (NGR: SK 603 136) in advance of the construction of a new meeting room at the church along with the replacement of the existing floor of the church.

Following advice from Historic England and the Diosesan Advisory Committee an archaeological evaluation was required to assess the impact of the new proposals. The new floor will be raised and the proposed depth of the floor foundation will be a maximum of 0.3m below the present floor surface.

The Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates the proposed site may contain archaeological remains due to its location adjacent to the church and close to other known sites.

It was proposed to excavate six test-pits within the church itself to examine what lay beneath the current 19th century tiled floor and a further four trial trenches were to be placed within the footprint of the new meeting room to assess at which level undisturbed burials lay.

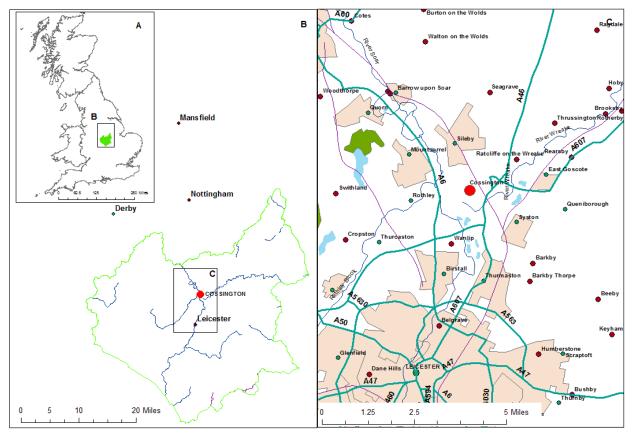


Figure 1: Site Location

Location and Geology

The proposed development is located in Cossington, c.9 km north of Leicester in the Charnwood district of Leicestershire (Figure 1). All Saints Church lies in the centre of the village on the western side of Main Street (Figure 2). The new meeting room is to be constructed on the northern side of the church, attached to the existing North Aisle.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of river gravel. The land lies at a height of c.50m aOD, on level ground. The proposed new building covers c.0.15 ha.

Historical and Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment has been prepared for the site and the Historic Environment Record for the site consulted (Clay and Clarke 2006).

A Bronze Age round barrow burial mound, Iron Age circular building, early Anglo-Saxon burials and finds were excavated by ULAS, in 1999. The excavation revealed evidence of further prehistoric activity including a post alignment, a rectangular enclosure and a palaeochannel.

The Church

All Saints Church is a Grade II* Listed Building dating from the 13th century with 15th century and 19th century additions (Pevsner 1960). It is constructed of granite rubble stone with stone dressings and Swithland slate roof to the chancel and south porch, while the rest of the roof is leaded and parapetted. It has stone coped gables, a west tower, nave, aisles, chancel and south porch.

The tower is 13th century with three phases and a small blocked west door, a western lancet with 19th century stained glass. It has a triple-chamfered nave arch, a 13th century four-bay northern arcade with double-chamfered arches on circular piers and an early 14th century four-bay south arcade with double sunk quadrant-moulded arches on quatrefoil piers. This has a Perpendicular clerestory with four three-light windows either side and 19th century tie beam roof. The north aisle has buttresses with set-offs and a part battlemented parapet, a north west window with Y tracery, a blocked north door, two north windows with 19th century stained glass, and a northeast window with Y-tracery and 19th century stained glass. By the chancel arch is part of spiral stairway to a former rood, and a squint to both aisles.

The chancel is of 14th century date and has windows with Reticulated tracery. The east window has Intersected tracery and stained glass c 1918 by Strachan. There are fine sedilia with ogee arches and piscina, and on the north wall is a 14th century tomb-recess, with ogee arch over the alabaster tomb chest, with incised top and carved sides, of Dr. Matthew Knightley, a former Rector, of 1556. The south windows have 19th century stained glass and the south aisle has buttresses and a part battlemented parapet. The south east window has Geometric tracery and stained glass of 1862. Two south windows have Y-tracery and the southwest window has restored Y-tracery. The south doorway is 14th century with a 19 century porch.

The church contains a round font, possibly 13th-14th century with a 17th century restored cover, a restored Perpendicular screen and pulpit while the partially restored choir stall ends are probably of same date. Some benches with linenfold panelling date from c. 1500. In the north aisle under the eastern window is a tomb with recumbent effigy of priest, c. 1320. In the chancel is an alabaster wall monument to Rev. William Stavely, a former Rector, of 1652.

A large amount of restoration work was carried out on the church during the period 1864-1867 under the aegis of rector Mayor, by the architect Henry Goddard and Son of Leicester. This included the removal of plaster from the church walls and the laying of the new tiled floor, and presumably the installation of the heating system. Walls were to be built under the sleepers and curbs of the pews to support their weight.

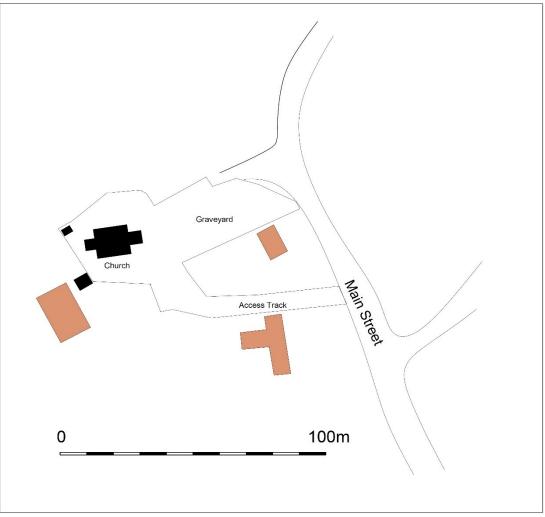


Figure 2: Location of All Saints' Church

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- 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 produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will demonstrate the existence of earthfast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

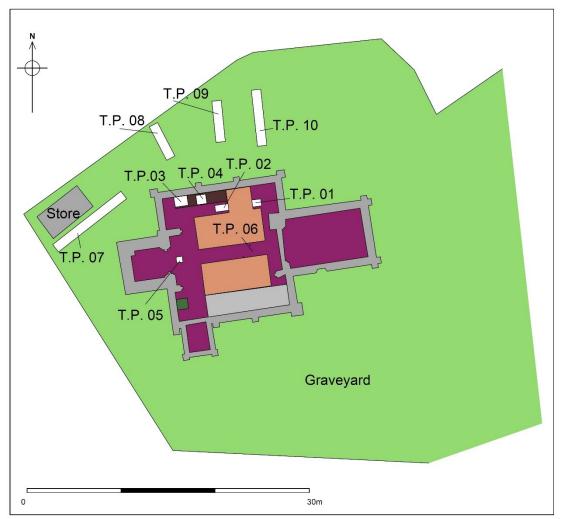


Figure 3: Test pits and trench locations

Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev.2014) in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (rev. 2014). The archaeological work followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (*WSI*) *for archaeological work* (WSI) prepared by ULAS.

A c.5% sample of the area of the proposed meeting room and external store was to be evaluated by trial trenching, the equivalent of one 10m by 1.6 m trenches and three 5m by 1.6m trenches $(c.32m^2)$. It was proposed that any burials encountered would be left *in situ*. Large roots, service pipes and a manhole were encountered, as well as having to fit the trenches between the gravestones, and so the trenches were shortened or lengthened to fit around these obstacles (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Work in progress on T P 07

Two 1m square hand dug test pits were proposed inside the church to assess the potential impact on the below ground fabric of the church. These were excavated to a maximum of 0.4m in the northern part of the nave where the floor had previously been damaged.

There is a brick lined under floor heating system in the church running along the north and south aisles and under the west tower. It was proposed that to limit the damage to the tiled floor from the excavation of test-pits, the iron grilles and concrete slabs that cover the heating system should be raised and the under floor areas inspected and recorded.

If the initial test pits indicated disturbance to this depth no further test pits would have been excavated. Two of the grilles were raised along with the concrete slab but further grilles to the south could not be raised. Also, inspection of the heating system was not considered representative of the majority of the church floor and so a single test pit was excavated through the tiled floor in the centre aisle of the church.

For the external trial trenches topsoil and overburden were removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket. The internal test pits were hand dug after the removal of the flooring. Trenches and test pits were be excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed ground, whichever is reached first. Within the church the test-pits were to be excavated to around 0.4m. All excavation, both by machine and hand, were undertaken with a view to avoid damage to archaeological deposits or features which appear worthy of preservation *in situ* or more detailed investigation than for the purposes of evaluation.

All test pits and trenches were to be back-filled after they had been recorded. All human bone was replaced into the trenches from where it had first been retrieved.

For clarity all the test pits and trenches were labelled as test pits, with the test pits inside the church labelled T.P 01-06 and external trenches as T.P 07-10.

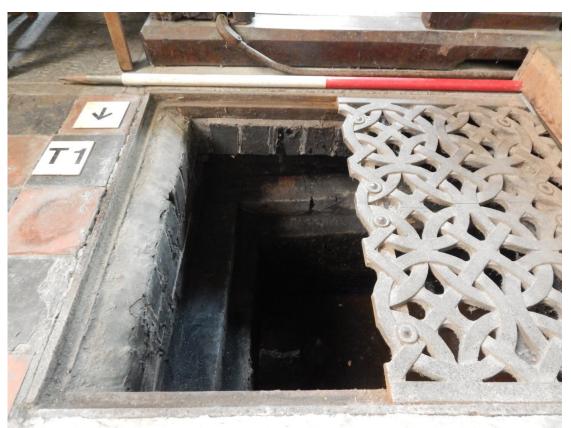


Plate 2: Test Pit 01; western end of heating system, with grille part removed

Church Floor

Test Pit 01

This test-pit consisted of the investigation of the eastern end of the heating system and no excavation was undertaken save the cleaning of the area under the grille for recording. The space under the grilles appeared to run the whole length of the north aisle and was constructed of blue bricks of 0.21 m x 0.11 m x 0.08 m with an edging of concrete (Plate 2; Figures 4 & 5). The visible area of the space measured around 0.74m by 0.95m and was around 0.95m deep, although the space was filled with water to a depth of around 0.5m. The space ran for around 2m until blocked by an iron door, leading into the next space to the west (Plate 3).

Some coal pieces and dust was removed during cleaning.



Plate 3: The interior of the heating system at eastern end (T.P 01) looking west

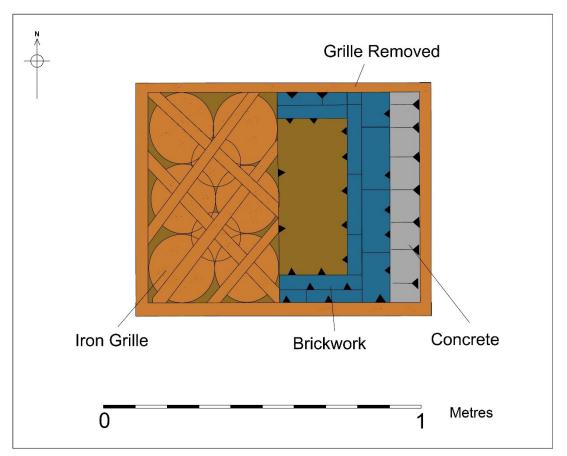


Figure 4: Plan of T.P 01

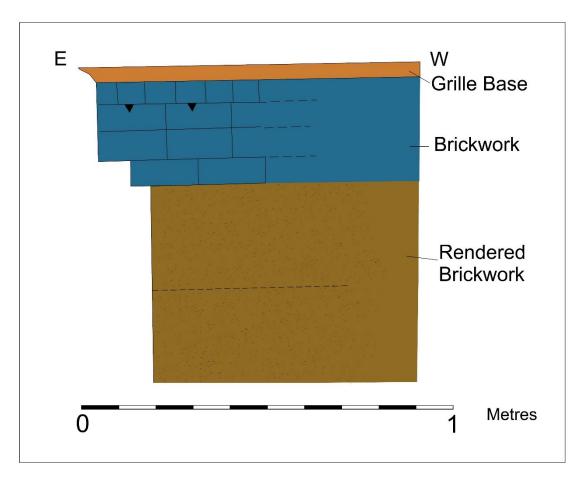


Figure 5: Sample north facing section of heating system (T.P 01)



Plate 4: Second section of heating system with central grille removed (T.P 02)

This test pit was the next section of the heating system to the west of Test Pit 01. This space measured 1.30m by 0.74m and was around 0.42m and was also constructed of bricks and tile with a metal pipe running through it. The space around the pipe was filled with debris and soil, which was extracted before the pit was recorded (Plate 4; Figure 6).

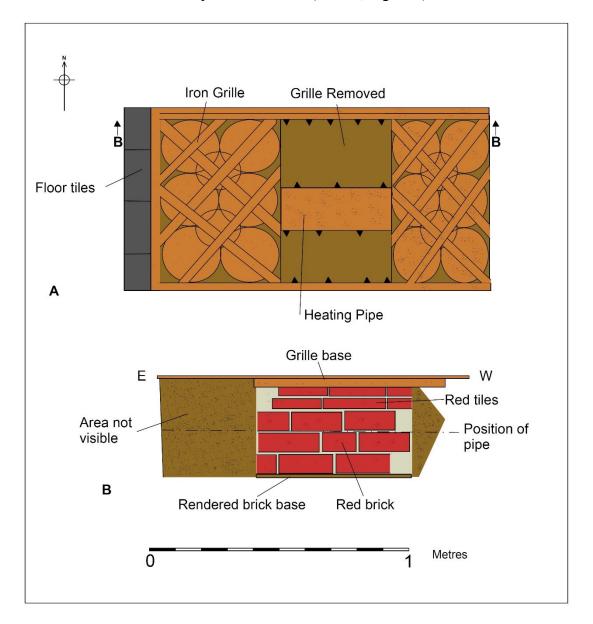


Figure 6: A. Plan of Test Pit 02, with grille part removed. B. North facing section

Test Pit 03

This test pit measured 1.5m by 1m and was excavated through an area of floor that was already damaged along the northern side of the north aisle close to the sealed north door. It was excavated to a depth of 0.4m; the maximum depth of excavation for the proposed new floor (Plate 5; Figure 7A). The east and west facing sections showed 0.11-0.15m of rubble hardcore over a very dark sandy silt soil containing small pieces of ceramic building material (CBM), tile and medium sized cobbles (Figures 7B & 7C).

There was a row of bricks, laid as a course of stretchers, along the edge of the north wall of the church, each measuring $0.24m \ge 0.12m \ge 0.06m$ and all heavily degraded. Under these was a mortar/ rubble layer and then the aforementioned soil, with some root action visible. On the north facing section lay a course of similar bricks, which were loose and lay on top of two mortar courses of brick with the upper laid as stretchers and the lower as headers.

A sherd of 12th century pottery was recovered from the soil layer.



Plate 5: Post excavation view of T.P 03, looking east

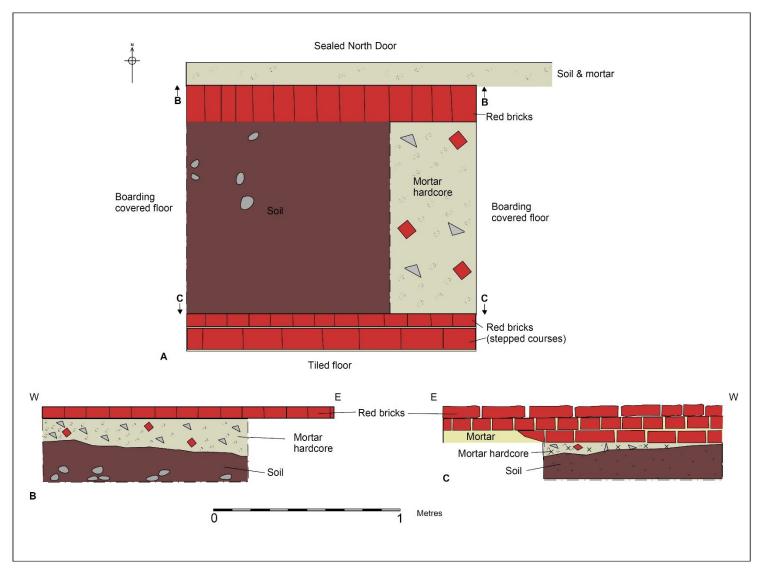


Figure 7: A. Post excavation plan of T.P 03. B. South facing section. C. North facing section

This test pit also lay along the north wall where the floor had collapsed. This was 1.32m long and 1m wide and was excavated to 0.40m depth (Plate 6; Figure 8A). The southern facing section had two courses of red bricks with a stretcher above a header course as in Test Pit 03. Below these bricks on the north facing section was a course of ironstone, roughly faced and seemingly the continuation of the lower course seen in Test Pit 03, but of stone. The bricks were mortared in but the stone seemed earth bonded (Figure 8B).

To the north the brick courses lay upon mortar and then the soil layer, but with medium sized cobbles roughly set into the matrix. These seemed to continue under the stonework on the southern side.

A sherd of 13th century pottery was retrieved from the soil layer.



Plate 6: Post excavation view of T.P 04, looking south, showing stonework and cobbles

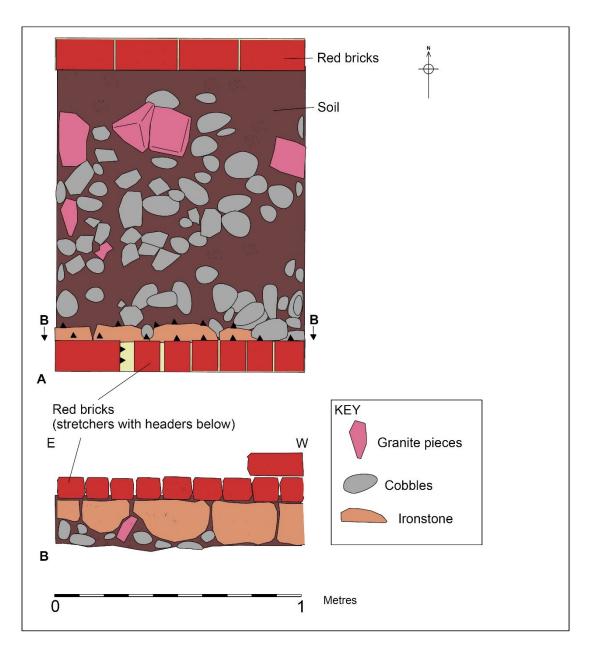


Figure 8: A. Post excavation plan T.P 04. B. North facing section

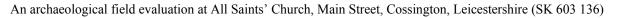
This was the space under the concrete inspection slab at the western end of the nave close to the base of the west tower. The space measured 0.60m by 0.60m and was around 0.50m deep. Within this space was a Y-shaped chamber of red brick construction, some of which were voussoirs to provide a curve. The bricks were of a visible size of $0.23m \times 0.08m$, of unknown width. The voussoirs were $0.10m \times 0.12m \times 0.05m$. The chamber was capped with slate, with a slab to the east and fragments to the west. The chamber was blackened but there was actual piping as in Test Pit 02.



Plate 7: Work in progress recording T.P 05, looking south-west



Plate 8: View inside heating system junction (T.P 05), looking north



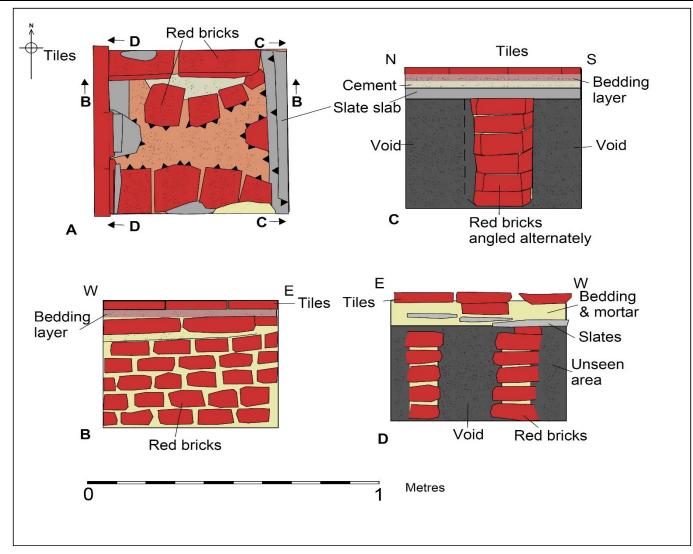


Figure 9: A. Plan of T.P 05. B. West facing section. C. South facing section. D. East facing section

This test pit was excavated through the floor of the central aisle after a section of the tiles had been lifted. The pit was oriented north-west to south-east following the cross pattern of the tiles (Figure 10A). The tiles were square, measuring around 0.15m (originally 6 inch) and around 25mm deep (1 inch) and either black or red in colour. These had been laid onto a thin bedding layer of brownish red sand. Under this was light brown/ cream crushed plaster hardcore, as seen in Test Pits 03 and 04 and then the dark sandy silt soil layer, with small roots, fragments of plaster and ceramic building material (CBM) and human bone (Figure 10B).

There appeared to be a small void close to the south-east corner. This was investigated by lifting a few more tiles in this corner, but was probably caused by root action.

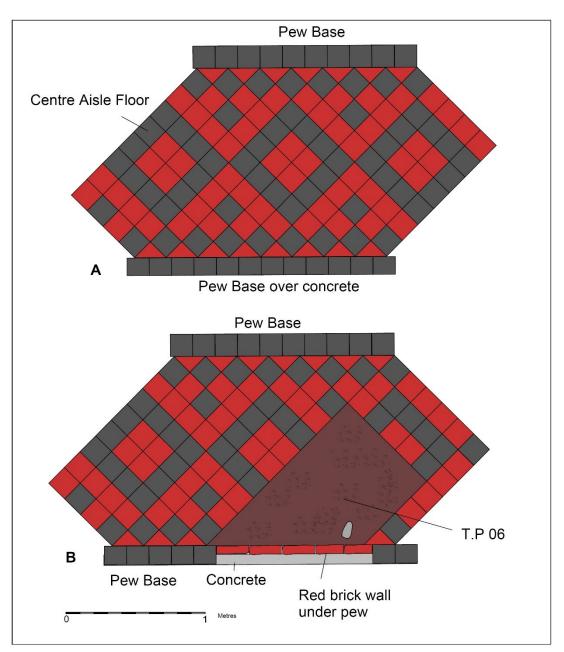


Figure 10: A. Sample of centre aisle floor pattern. B. Plan of T.P 06 through central aisle floor



Plate 9: North facing section of T.P 06, looking south

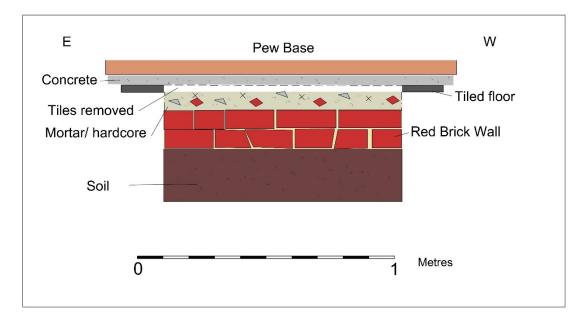


Figure 11: T.P 06 north facing section

When the tiles were removed along the southern edge of the test pit, a layer of concrete could be seen underlying the pew base along here. This overlay two courses of a brick wall that supported the pew base (Figure 11).

Churchyard

All the trenches in the churchyard were excavated using a small tracked excavator fitted with a 1m wide toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. There are tree preservation orders on many of the trees around the area to be excavated and so where large tree roots were encountered excavation was halted and the bucket moved to a more appropriate place. This proved very difficult in places and so the trenches were often not of equal depth or length.

Test Pit 07

This was oriented north-east to south-west and was excavated just to the south of the storage outhouse in the north-west corner of the church yard. There is an earthrod affixed to the earth here and the trench was squeezed in between this and the store. The aforementioned tree roots, a service pipe and a large manhole were encountered and so the trench was of very unequal depth and broadly consisted of two test pits within a total length of around 9.2m.

The excavated areas varied between 0.43m and 0.80m depth. The upper soils were generally a dark yellowish brown sandy clay or silt with a subtle difference between an upper 'topsoil' of around 0.28m-0.30m depth and a lower soil which was more mid yellowish brown with sub-angular stones, small fragments of slate, a large amount of tree root action, and disarticulated human bone, which was encountered at around 0.8m depth.



Plate 10: The area for the proposed new meeting room

Test Pit 08

This was oriented north-west to south-east and was excavated between two lines of gravestones to the north of the north-west buttress of the north aisle of the church. Large tree roots also foreshortened this trench to around 4m in length. The soils were very similar to those encountered in Test Pit 07, with around 0.30m of topsoil lying over a more mixed layer to the base of the trench at between 0.40m-0.90m depth. An articulated skeleton, with the exposed skull lying to the left, was encountered at 0.88m depth.



Plate 11: Base of T. P 08 showing skull in situ, looking south

This trench was oriented north to south and situated between two rows of gravestones to the north of the centre of the north aisle. It was around 4.4m long and very many large tree roots were encountered, many following the line of the trench. The topsoil was between 0.23m-0.28m deep over the mixed subsoil to the base of the trench at 0.68m, where disarticulated bone was encountered.

Test Pit 10

The final trench was oriented north to south and lay to the north of the north-east buttress of the north aisle. The trench was 6m long and as fewer large roots were encountered, it was possible to excavate the trench down to the natural sub-stratum of brownish orange sand at between 0.92m and 1.30m depth. Articulated bone was encountered around 0.80m - 1m depth (Plate 12).

Conclusion

The test pit and trench evaluation within the church building and within the churchyard of All Saints' Church, Cossington was undertaken in order to assess the impact on the new development proposals of a new meeting room at the church and a new church floor.

The test pit evaluation within the church consisted of six pits; two excavated through the collapsed floor (T.Ps 03 & 04), one through the tiled floor (T.P 06) and three examined spaces within the 19th century heating system (T.Ps 01, 02 & 05).

The sequence within the main tiled floor of the church showed that the ceramic tiles were set into a bedding layer of sand over a 0.30m layer of hardcore, mainly consisting of redeposited plaster from the church walls plus stone and mortar, lying over the dark silty soil beneath. This was largely the sequence observed under the damaged floor along the north aisle, except that a low wall of brick and stone had lay under the floor at each side of the collapsed floor to provide support for the short pews that lay along the northern side of the church.

Cobbles were located within the soil within T.P 03 and were discovered *in situ* within T.P 04. A sherd of 12th century pottery was recovered from T.P 03 and a sherd of 13th pottery was located in T.P 04. This would appear to indicate that the cobbles may be the remnant of a cobbled surface or path, predating the 13th century north aisle.

A small amount of disarticulated human bone was discovered within T.P 06, which may indicate that burials were disturbed during the lowering and renewing of the floor in the 19th century. However, it is also possible that graveyard soil was brought in to level the floor at this stage.

The test pits that consisted of the examination of the heating system below the floor afforded a brief examination of the heating system, which appeared to run down the north, and presumably, the south aisles, and under the floor of the west tower. The large pit at the eastern end of the north aisle (T.P 01), appeared to be deeper than the other spaces and was constructed of blue engineering bricks rather than the red bricks seen in the other spaces. The space here was largely full of water, but also had some remnants of coal dust within it. Presumably the water had merely drained into the space.

A brief examination of archived documents of correspondence between a Reginald Pole-Wedlake and the Craig and Mills heating company relating to Cossington Church held by the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland has revealed that in 1929 a pair of 'Minerva' heaters were purchased from Craig and Mills Ltd, Manchester to provide heating for the church using 'the existing flues in the church'. The heaters would 'provide 50,000 cubic feet of air per hour at 250 degrees F, with the fuel consumption of 8 lbs of gas coke'.

The price, at £165, would include the two Minerva heaters and would also include 'making smokepipe connections from the 2 heaters to the existing $6\frac{1}{4}$ inch x 9 inch C.I (cast iron) flues'. The documents also say that 'the gratings for the warm air outlet and cold air intake size 2'6" x 3' would be fixed to the floor of the side aisles' (ROLLR Document DE 510/90).

It was also unclear where these heaters were positioned. Further investigation of the heating system may be possible when the floor is replaced.

The trenches excavated in the churchyard to the north of the north aisle were difficult to position and to fully excavate due to large tree roots and some services and manholes. However, it was possible to conclude that the upper soils of the yard where, as may be expected, heavily disturbed and mixed. Disarticulated bone was encountered in all four trenches at around 0.68m-0.80m, and articulated remains were revealed at 0.88m depth in T.P 08.



Plate 12: T.P 10, post excavation, looking north

References

Clay, P. and Clarke, S., 2006 An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for All Saints' Church, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire (SK 603 136). ULAS Report No. 2006-155

Pevsner, N., 1984 Leicestershire and Rutland (Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of England) Yale University Press; 2nd Revised edition

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank architect David Pendery, church warden Malcolm Kitching and Gareth McCague for their help and co-operation with this project. Leon Hunt and Sue Henderson would like to extend their thanks to Gareth McCague for his hospitality and help with the fieldwork.

The project was managed by Patrick Clay and the work was carried out by Leon Hunt and Sue Henderson of ULAS. The finds were examined by Deborah Sawday of ULAS.

Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A65.2016 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2016-090)
- 5 Test pit recording sheets
- 1 Photo Record sheet

- 1 Contact sheet of digital photographs
- 1 CD digital photographs
- 1 Drawing record sheet
- 3 A3 sheets of permatrace with primary drawings

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Appendix 1: OASIS data entry

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

	Oasis No				
	Project Name	An archaeological field evaluation at All Saints' Church, Main Street, Leicestershire (SK 603 136)			
PROJECT	Start/end dates of field work	23-05-2016 to 26-05-2016 and 31-05-2016			
	Previous/Future Work	Not known			
	Project Type	Evaluation			
	Site Status	Listed Building Grade II*			
DETAILS	Current Land Use	Church and Chu	rchyard		
DETAILS	Monument Type/Period	Medieval			
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery Medieval			
	Development Type		ilding. Improvement	ts to church	
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF			
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition			
	Planning Ref.	-			
	Site	All Saints' Church, Main Street, Leicestershire			
PROJECT	Address/Postcode	0.151			
LOCATION	Study Area	c.0.15 ha. SK 603 136			
	Site Coordinates				
	Height OD Organisation	50m aOD ULAS			
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (LCC)			
PROJECT	Project Design Originator	ULAS			
CREATORS	Project Manager	Patrick Clay			
	Project Director/Supervisor	Leon Hunt			
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Cossington PPC			
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Appendix II: The Post Roman Pottery

Deborah Sawday

The pottery, two sherds, weighing 25 grams, was catalogued with reference to the ULAS and Nottingham fabric series (Sawday 2009; Nailor and Young 2001; Nailor 2005). The results are shown below (table 1).

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Table 1: Then pottery by context, fabric ware, sherd number and weight (grams)

Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos.	Grams	Comments
POTTERY				
TP3	SP2 – Nottingham, Splashed ware	1	17	Wheel throw body with the inscribed curvilinear decoration typical of this fabric, externally sooted no evidence for glaze, c.1100- c.1150
TP4	NO2 – Nottingham Early Glazed ware,	1	8	Wheel thrown body, some abrasion, speckled/blotchy lead & copper glaze, early to mid-13th C.

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