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Archaeological Services

Archaeological Attendance and recording

during groundworks at

St Mary the Virgin Church,

Coleorton, Leicestershire LE67 8FB

NGR SK 39075 17248



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**Archaeological Attendance and recording during groundworks at
St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashby Road, Coleorton,
Leicestershire LE67 8FB
NGR SK 39075 17248**

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Archaeological Attendance and recording during groundworks at St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashby Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire LE67 8FB.

Summary

Archaeological attendance was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashby Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire LE67 8FB. The work was commissioned by North West Leicestershire District Council, in advance of groundworks in the churchyard in the form of trial holes dug against the boundary retaining wall of the churchyard.

The site lies within the village of Coleorton and St Marys Church is a Grade II Listed building lying to the west of the village. The churchyard lies within the Coleorton Hall Conservation Area

Four trial holes were excavated during the course of the archaeological investigation. No archaeological remains were identified and no artefacts recovered from the trenches.

The fieldwork was carried out by Claire LaCombe. The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession Number X.A105.2017

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by North West Leicestershire District Council to carry out archaeological attendance at St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashby Road, Coleorton Leicestershire LE67 8FB. The work was required to establish the causes of movement of the boundary retaining wall.

This archaeological work is in accordance with NPPF Section 12: Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment.

Site Location, Geology and Topography

Coleorton is located approximately 15 miles North West of Leicester. Saint Mary's Church is a Grade II Listed Building which lies to the West of the village, just off the Ashby Road (Figure 1). The churchyard lies within the Coleorton Hall Conservation Area at a height of 160m aOD.

The British Geological Survey for England and Wales indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation sedimentary sandstone. <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/GeologyOfBritain/viewer.html>.

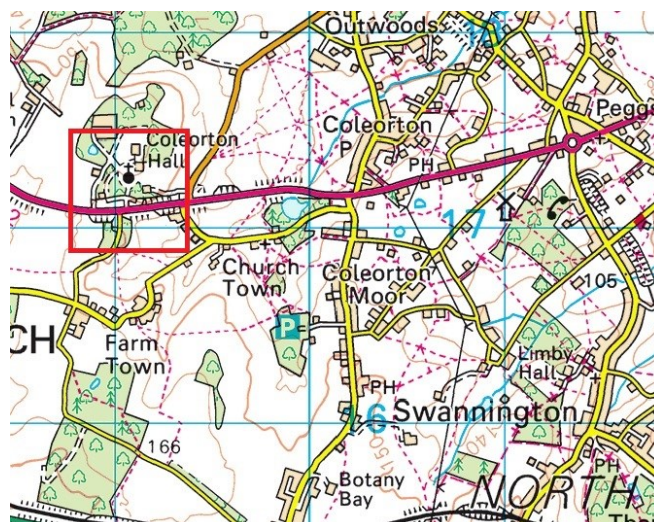


Figure 1: Location of site (contains OS data).

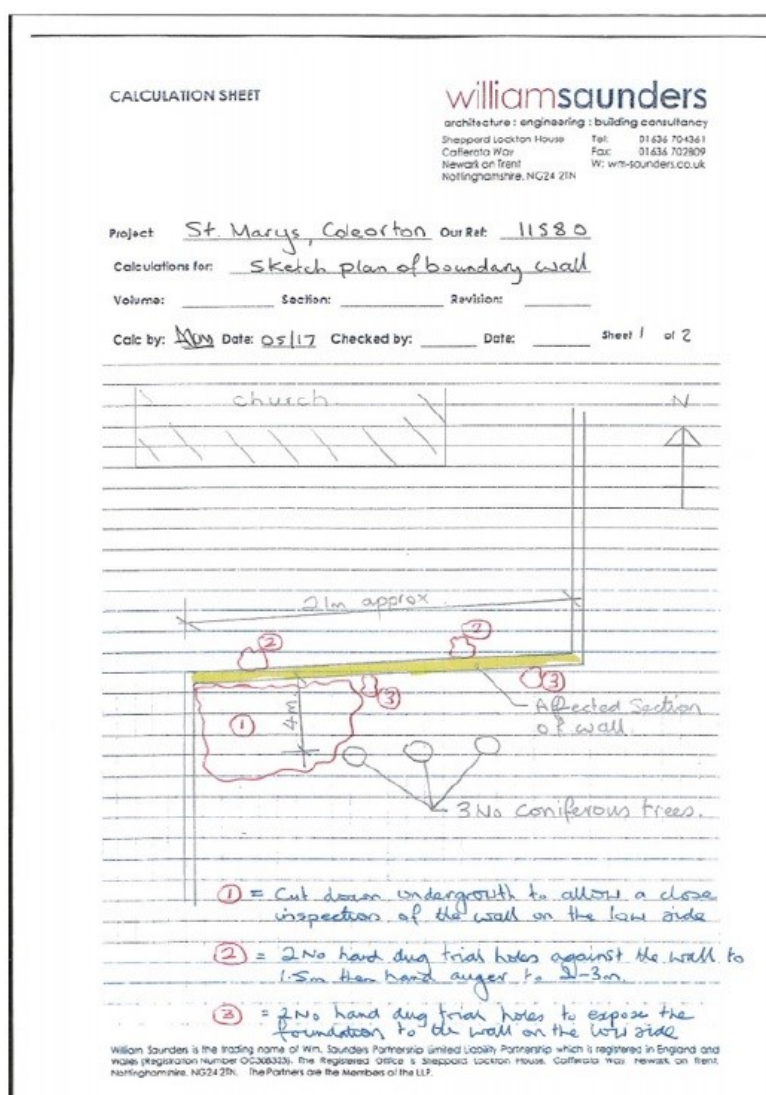


Figure 2: Sketch plan of St Marys Church showing location of trial holes (Provided by client)



Figure 3: Approximate location of wall outlined in red (Google Earth data)

Archaeological Background

Coleorton is a village and civil parish in North West Leicestershire, approximately 3.2km east of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Coal mining was an important industry in the area. Coleorton had its own colliery which was situated between Coleorton and Swannington but is now disused.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin is a Grade II listed building, built of stone in the Gothic style. The western tower was built in the 12th century, with the later addition of a beautiful spire. The tower contains eight bells, two of which, together with a clock, were added in 1873 by Sir George Howland Beaumont, 9th bart, and other parishioners. The bells are still rung regularly. The stained glass of the west window in the tower was brought from Rouen, and presented by a former Sir George H. Beaumont. There are other windows dedicated to Mr. Merewether, Sir George H. Beaumont and to the Rev. Canon W. R. Beaumont, rector during 1864-1901. In the south aisle, above the family vault, is the tomb of Sir Henry Beaumont ob. 1607 and Lady Elizabeth. The church was restored in 1851, when the north aisle was extended, the chancel re-floored and a new organ and pulpit set up. The church can accommodate 250 seated worshippers.

St Marys lies very close to Coleorton Hall where in c. 1806 William and Dorothy Wordsworth designed a Winter Garden to be planted in an old quarry. The garden includes a grotto with shellwork by Dorothy Wordsworth, a circular pool with fountain and to the north a buttressed stone wall with viewing terrace (**MLE22551**). The hall had an 18th century formal garden, modified in the early 19th century for Sir George Beaumont. There are terraces, lodges, a water garden with grotto, monuments and memorials, yew and lime tree avenues, etc (**MLE4506**).

Groundworks associated with the proposed development are highly likely to disturb any archaeological remains that may be present. The suggested 'anchors' of the wall, with rods/cables being driven through the soil and held into place with an anchor to prevent the wall from collapsing, would undoubtedly disturb any archaeology / human interments that are

buried within the churchyard. Consequently there is a likelihood that buried archaeological remains will be affected by the development.

Archaeological Objectives

The main objective of the archaeological excavation was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any significant archaeology on the site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The aims of the archaeological attendance were as follows:

- 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 produce an archive and report of any results.

Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014a) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2014b).

A Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work was produced by ULAS prior to the archaeological work being undertaken.

North West Leicestershire District Council (the client) proposes to undertake groundworks in the form of trial holes against the boundary retaining wall of the churchyard (Figures 2 & 3). The purpose of the trial holes is to confirm the causes of movement of the boundary retaining wall. The DAC has granted a faculty for work with a condition that 'no works shall take place until the PCC, after consultation with the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the PCC and approved by the DAC'.

On 13th September 2017, an archaeologist was in attendance to monitor groundworks. Four hand-dug trial holes were monitored; two on the northern side of the retaining wall (churchyard) and two on the southern side.

Results

The Northern side of the retaining wall

Prior to arrival, the wall had been fenced off to prevent public access directly to the wall, which was in a poor state of repair (Figures 4 & 5). The first investigation pit (T1) was positioned approximately 2.5m from the western corner of the wall, just to the east of the bench. The dimensions of the hole was 0.6m x 0.5m and it was dug to a depth of 2.65m (Figures 7 & 8). The second investigation pit (T2) was positioned approximately 12m

further east along the wall with dimensions of 1.2m x 0.7m and dug to a depth of 1.5m (Figure 9).

Both investigation pits had approximately 0.2m of topsoil, which consisted of very dark and fertile soil, moving down onto a subsoil layer of mid – light brown sandy subsoil which had <10% red clay and sandstone inclusions. There were also some small fist size pieces of red brick and tile mixed within the subsoil. Close to the bottom of the pits, the sandstone became more concentrated and some pieces were rather large and cobble sized.

T1 produced no archaeology. T2 produced some small disarticulated human bone fragments within the topsoil and very close to the surface. Further down the investigative pit at approximately 0.5m – 1.0m more disarticulated bone was found within the subsoil. Approximately eight small human bones / bone fragments were recovered. These were reburied with due respect as the pit was filled in.

The northern face of the wall as it stands from the Church yard is a relatively low boundary at little over 1m high in places. It is notable that the graves, some marked with headstones and some not, are positioned very closely, if not against this boundary wall. Any works that should disturb this ground to a depth of 1.5-2.0m will have an impact on the archaeology and/or burials that are here.



Figure 4: Looking East along the northern elevation of the wall.



Figure 5: Looking east from the edge of the trees on the northern elevation of the wall at the point where T2 will be dug (between the two headstones against the wall).



Figure 6: Photograph showing the southern elevation of the retaining boundary wall and the steep slope covered in vegetation leading up towards it.



Figure 7: T1 – Investigative pit after excavation. Shows the brickwork of the wall running down to the base of the pit where the stonework of the old wall is visible.



Figure 8: T1, Looking into the investigation pit. The stonework of the original wall is visible close to the base.



Figure 9: T2, Looking down into the investigative pit. Wall shows signs of repair.

Southern side of the retaining wall

The southern side of the wall had to be accessed by climbing over the boundary wall to the eastern side of the church and walking round through the overgrown foliage to the other side of the wall. The height of the land here was considerably lower than the church yard with the wall being built at the top of a steep embankment (Figure 6). At the base of the embankment, there was temporary fencing, separating the overgrown ivy and nettle covered mound from the gardens of Coleorton Hall and preventing access to the wall.

The third investigation pit (T3) was positioned roughly the opposite side of the wall to T2 (0.4m x 0.85m – Figures 10 & 11)). This could not be precisely located, as access to measure the wall was restricted by overgrowth. Likewise, the fourth trench (T4) was positioned the opposite side of the wall to T1 (0.5m x 0.5m – Figures 12 & 13).

T3 and T4 both had a minimum depth of topsoil (approximately 0.1m) going down onto light brown sandy subsoil with >10% sand stone inclusions. Close to the bottom of the pits, the sandstone became more concentrated and some pieces were rather large and cobble sized. T3 was dug to a depth of 1.7m and T4 was dug to 1.35m. No finds or archaeological features were recovered in either of these investigative pits.

The southern face of the wall is largely covered by Ivy and other creeping foliage and stands at approximately 2.5m in places from ground level. The base of the wall sits on top of a very steep embankment and appears to have very little footing. The original stone boundary wall of the church can be seen in Figure 6 standing at approximately 0.75m high. It is constructed out of local stone and has been mortared together. The brick built wall which sits on top of

the stone wall is a later addition with the whole construction acting as a retaining wall to keep the ground of the church yard held back. It is unlikely that any groundworks along the embankment would disturb any archaeology. However, it is highly likely that any penetrating works to the wall in order to pin it to which disturb the ground in the churchyard in any way would have a detrimental effect on interred human remains.



Figure 10: T3, Looking at the investigative pit surface. Photograph shows the lack of footing to the wall.



Figure 11: Looking down into T3. Photograph shows the lack of footing to the wall.



Figure 12: T4 surface of the investigative pit. Photograph showing lack of footing for the wall and also the poor state of the wall.



Figure 13: Looking down into T4 onto the natural sandstone of the embankment.

Discussion

It was observed during the attendance at this site that the potential for archaeological deposits or features on the southern side of the wall is slight due to the positioning of the wall on top of the embankment. However, with the use of the churchyard for interred human remains at depth, and the close proximity of burials to the wall, the potential for disturbing any archaeology / human remains is very high. The stratigraphy comprised of a mixed sandy subsoil showing multiple signs of truncation and included some modern building debris, with a very shallow layer of rich topsoil. This overlaid a beige sandstone natural substratum.

Archive

The archive consists of the following:

- 1 unbound copy of this report
- 1 watching brief recording sheet
- 1 set of digital photographs

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession Number X.A105.2017

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, under ID: universi1-296180. Available at: <http://oasis.ac.uk/>

OASIS entry summary

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-296180		
	Project Name	St Mary the Virgin Church		
	Start/end dates of field work	13.09.2017		
	Previous/Future Work	Not known		
	Project Type	Watching Brief		
	Site Status	Grade II Listed		
	Current Land Use	Boundary Wall / Church yard / Gardens		
	Monument Type/Period	Boundary Wall		
	Significant Finds/Period	None		
	Development Type	Repair of grade II listed retaining boundary wall		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	n/a		
	Planning Ref.	n/a		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashby Road, Coleorton Leicestershire LE67 8FB		
	Study Area	n/a		
	Site Coordinates	SK 39075 17248		
	Height OD	160m OD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority - North-west Leicestershire District Council		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	John Thomas		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Claire LaCombe		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	North West Leicestershire District Council		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	NA	LCC Mus Service	LCC Mus Service
	ID (Acc. No.)		X.A105.2017	X.A105.2017
	Contents		Photos Survey data	Watching brief records Field Notes
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	Archaeological Attendance and recording during groundworks at St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashby Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire LE67 8FB		
	Author	LaCombe, C.		
	Other bibliographic details	ULAS Report No 2017-139		
	Date	2017		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		
	Description	Developer Report A4 pdf		

Publication

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.

Bibliography

CIfA 2014a *Code of Conduct* Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

CIfA 2014b *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

Source: “St Marys, Coleorton” 52°45’04.76” N 1°25’20.66”W. **Google Earth**. May 26, 2017. September 15, 2017.

Source: “Coleorton Parish” website. <http://www.coleorton.org.uk/ColeortonChurches.html>

Source: “Geological Survey for England and Wales” website <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/GeologyOfBritain/viewer.html>.

ULAS. 2017 *Written Scheme of investigation for Archaeological Attendance and recording during groundworks St Marys Church, Ashby Road, Coleorton, Leicestershire*. ULAS 18-204

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken on behalf of North West Leicestershire District Council and was carried out by Claire LaCombe. John Thomas managed the project. We would like to thank Alan Milner and his team of workers for their co-operation during the work.

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18/09/2017

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