

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
At All Saints' Church, Beeby,
Leicestershire. (SK 664 083)**

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For: The Churches Conservation Trust

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at All Saints Church, Beeby, Leicestershire (SK664 083). The watching brief involved the monitoring of the dismantling of mid-19th Century box pews. It was possible that the box pews had been constructed using reused timbers and that their removal would expose archaeological features below them. The watching brief revealed no archaeological features and the timbers did not appear to have been reused. The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services with accession number X.A. 175. 2004.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by The Churches Conservation Trust to carry out a watching brief during the dismantling of mid 19th century box pews at All Saints church, Beeby, Leicestershire. The timber struts, which held the pews in place, had rotted and the decision had been taken to replace these timbers and reconstruct the box pews in their original position. Therefore a watching brief was requested by the Churches Conservation Trust.

The tiny village of Beeby has a small population and this has created problems with the upkeep of the church and so the building has passed into the hands of The Churches Conservation Trust (formally the Redundant Churches Fund).

The appointed architect for All Saints is Mr. Peter McFarlane and the carpenter carrying out the work to the pews was Bill Howlett.

Site Location

Beeby village lies to the north east of Leicester approximately 8 miles from the City Centre.

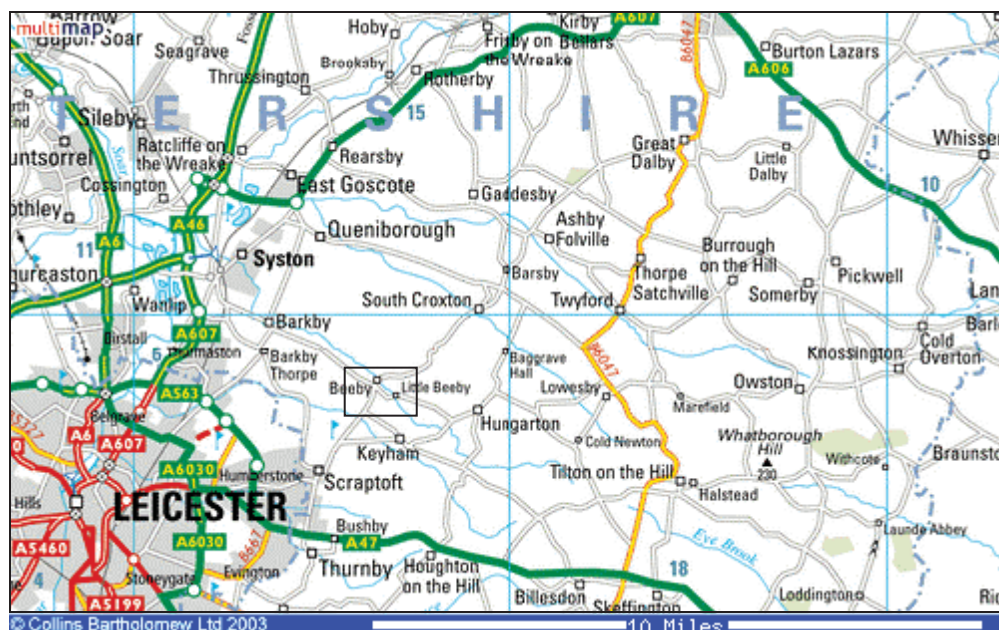


Figure 1: Location Map of Beeby in relation to Leicester.

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History

Pevsner calls All Saints' Church, Beeby an 'unfortunate' church, most likely in reference to its partially built spire. The oldest parts of the church are 13th century but most of the building dates from the 14th and 15th centuries. The church is mainly constructed of light brown or 'orange' limestone, whereas the facing of the tower is of limestone ashlar.

The most striking external feature is the unfinished spire, but of the internal work it is the later features that promote the most interest, such as the 14th century screenwork and the Georgian box pews, which most likely date from 1835 if local records are correct.

Aims and Methods

The purpose of the watching brief was to ascertain whether any archaeological deposits were present, this would include checking the dismantled pews for evidence of reused timbers and inspecting the floor surfaces beneath the pews for evidence of archaeology. If so, the character, extent and date range of any deposits identified would be established, in order to assess their significance. Recording of these deposits would be carried out as appropriate, and an archive and this report produced. The work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, and adhered to the University's Health and Safety policy.

The site was visited by an archaeologist on the 3rd June 2004. The wood of the pews was inspected and the area occupied by the pews was examined. (Fig.2).

Results

By the time of the visit of 3/6/04 the pews had already been dismantled and the timbers, which formed the basic structure of the pews, were lying in a pile to close to the main door of the church. The hardwood timbers were around 7cms wide in cross section and appeared to have been assembled using a series of overlapping joints and nails. Although the timbers are undoubtedly old and rotten none appeared to have been reused.

The area in which the box pews had stood had been cleared of the pew structure, but not of rubble and bricks. The area consisted of a roughly rectangular space measuring approximately 340cm wide by 680cm long (figure 2).

The ground under the box pews consisted of areas of stone and patches of soil. The stone appeared to be similar to the structural stone of the church and most likely formed part of the foundations. The soil, where visible, consisted of light brown silt. The main piers of the church were visible with the pews removed and appeared in places to sit upon, and been underpinned by, a series of narrow flat bricks.

Some stonework was visible at the southern edge of the pew area. This appeared to sit partially under the current brick floor (figure 2).

Approximately 1m from the north west corner of the pew area was a void which appeared to continue under the main aisle of the church. The hole was brick lined with internal dimensions of 20cms. It was not possible to see how far this space continued under the aisle.

Conclusion

The timbers do not appear to have been any older than the pews which they supported and are likely to be mid nineteenth century in date and contemporary with the rest of the pew structure. The hole under the main aisle may well be part of a 19th century flue, which may have formed part of an under floor heating system.

Archive

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services with accession number X.A175.2004 and consists of the following:

- 1 watching brief record sheets, including a sketch plan.
- 17 Colour slides

Bibliography

Brandwood, G. 1994. *All Saints' Church Beeby, Leicestershire*. The Churches Conservation Trust Guide Book. F.W Cupit (Printers Ltd.).

Pevsner, N. 1960 *The Buildings of England. Leicestershire and Rutland*. Penguin Books.

Acknowledgements

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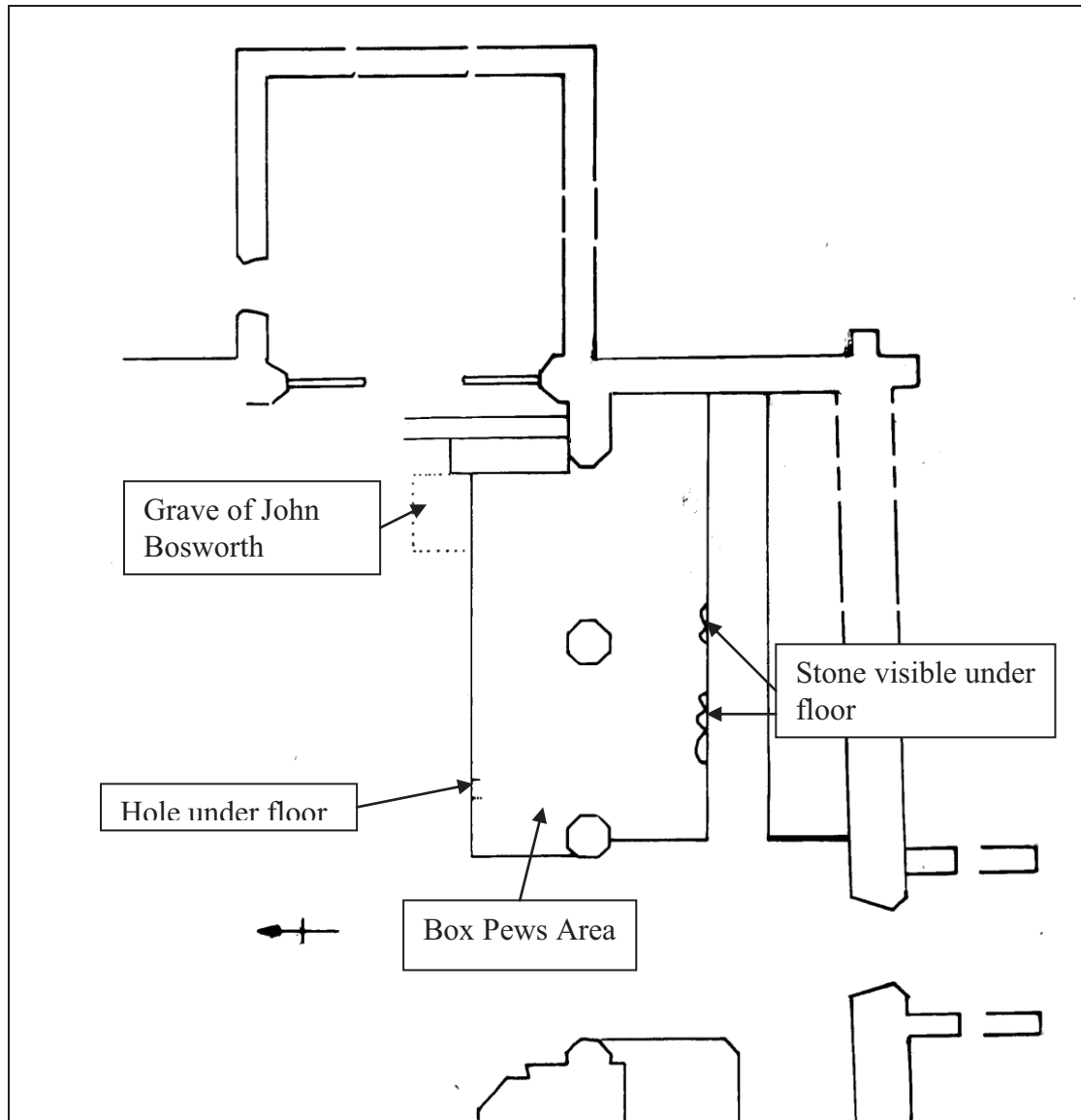


Figure 2: South east corner of All Saints' Church, Beeby showing features observed during watching brief. Scale 1:100

