

Archaeological Observation

**St Leonard's Church
Yarpole
Herefordshire**

**NGR: SO 46952 64828
SMR No 4925**

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Report specification

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1. Non Technical Summary

Archaeological observation of groundworks relating to the conversion of the western part of the nave for use as a village shop and post office was carried out within the interior of St Leonard's Church, Yarpole, Herefordshire, (Phase 1) and was followed by further observation of groundworks outside the church immediately southwest of the porch (Phase 2).

The first phase of archaeological observation was carried out on January 26th and February 2nd 2009 with the second phase taking place from April 22nd to 24th 2009.

Two areas were excavated within the church during Phase 1. Area 1, at the west end of the nave, measured approximately 6.5m × 5.5m and was excavated to a depth of approximately 0.6m. Area 2, at the east end of the nave, adjacent to the raised entrance to the chancel, measured 6.3m × 1.1m and was excavated to a depth of approximately 0.6m. Reduction of the church floor revealed the presence of human remains concentrated in both Area 1 (the western part of the nave) and Area 2 (adjacent to the raised entrance to the chancel).

Phase 2 comprised the reduction by approximately 0.35m of an area to the southwest of the south porch measuring roughly 8m × 8m. This revealed several 18th century gravestones but no associated graves. Although fragmentary human remains were present, they appeared to form part of a landscaping deposit. This deposit was probably associated with levelling activity carried out concurrently with the restoration of the church in 1863-4.

No finds or features of archaeological significance were observed during either Phase 1 or Phase 2 of the groundworks.

2. Introduction

2.1 Border Archaeology was instructed by Barry Morgan Esq., of the Yarpole Community Group Project, on behalf of the PCC, to carry out archaeological observation of groundworks relating to the conversion of the western part of the nave of St Leonard's Church, Yarpole, Herefordshire, to a village shop and post office, comprising reduction of the existing floor level and access works to the SW of the S porch (NGR: SO 46952 64828) (Planning ref: DCNW2008/2130/F).

2.2 Copies of this report will be submitted to Mr Morgan, the Hereford Diocesan Advisory Committee and the Herefordshire Sites & Monuments Record.

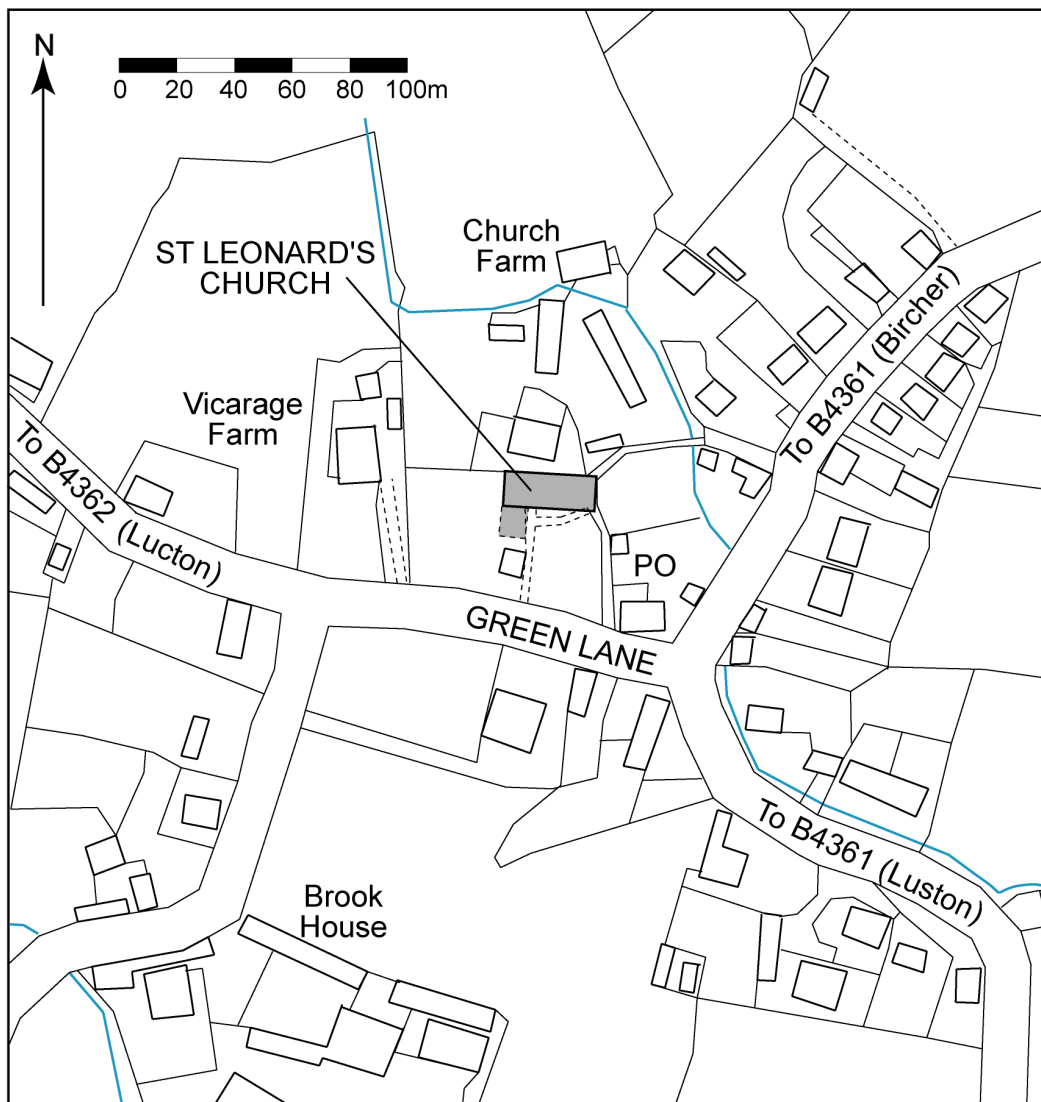


Fig 1: Plan showing the location of the site

2.4 Soils & Geology

- 2.5 The site is characterised by typical alluvial gley soils of the CONWAY (811b) series (SSEW1983), consisting of deep stoneless fine silty and clayey soils, variably affected by groundwater. The underlying geology is river alluvium.

3. Brief Historical and Archaeological Background

- 3.1 St Leonard's Church at Yarpole, a Grade II* Listed building (SMR Record No. 6924) dates chiefly from the early 14th century (the surviving medieval fabric consisting of the nave and S porch), although its earlier origins are indicated by the octagonal font of early 13th century date. The existing nave roof dates from the 15th century, while the entire fabric of the church was extensively restored by the noted Victorian architect Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1863-4 at a cost of £1705, who also rebuilt the chancel and added the present north aisle (RCHME, 1934, 215; Pevsner, 1963, 327).
- 3.2 Situated within the churchyard, immediately S of St Leonard's Church is a well-preserved, detached medieval bell tower (Grade I Listed), one of several surviving examples in northern Herefordshire (others being situated at Pembridge and Holmer). A recent programme of dendrochronological analysis of the timbers used in the construction of the tower revealed three phases of building activity, the earliest dating from 1195-6, while the latter phases were approximately dated to 1332-66 and 1470-1506, respectively (Tyers, 2002).

4. Methodology

- 4.1 Fieldwork was carried out in accordance with archaeological practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA, 2001). Border Archaeology adheres to the IfA *Code of conduct* and *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology*.
- 4.2 The fieldwork comprised the archaeological observation of all groundworks carried out on the site prior to development. All materials were removed by hand or by machine and toothless bucket.
- 4.3 Written and graphic records were made using *pro forma* record forms and sheets, in accordance with archaeological practices set out by the IfA (2001). Any identified archaeological deposits, features and structures were recorded in plan at a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 and in section/elevation at scales of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50. A photographic record was made using a 10.3 MPX digital camera.
- 4.4 Border Archaeology attended site at the request of the groundworks contractor after the existing floor was removed mechanically.

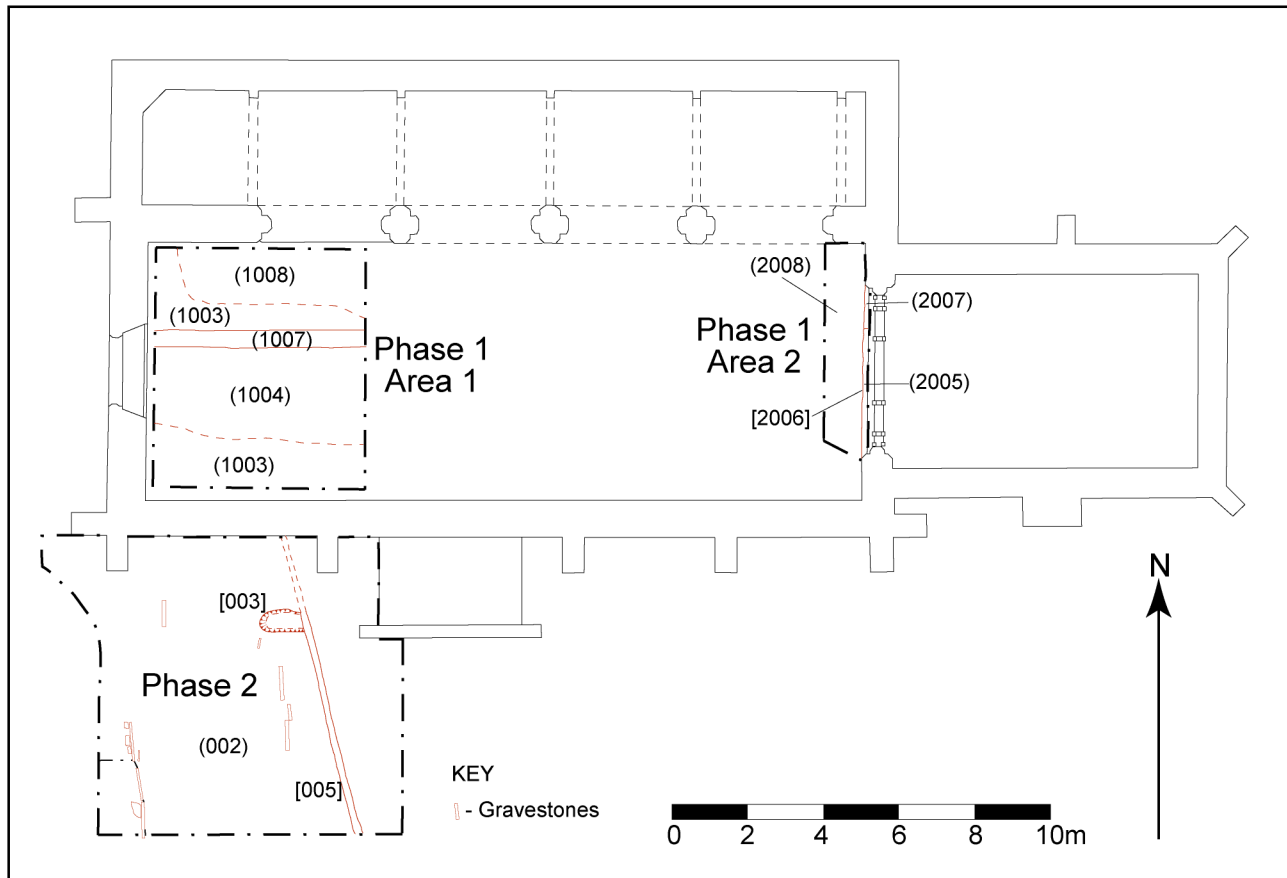


Fig 2: Plan of church showing Phase 1, Area 1 & Area 2, and Phase 2 area of ground reduction

5. Results

- 5.1 Two areas were excavated within the interior of the church during Phase 1 of the archaeological observation.
- 5.2 Area 1 situated at the W end of the nave extended approximately 6.5m N-S × 5.5m E-W and was excavated to a depth of approximately 0.6m. Six contexts were identified, the uppermost of which was a reddish-orange building sand extending >6.5m × >5.5m to a depth of 0.06m (1001). This overlay a reddish-brown silty sand deposit (1002) also extending >6.5m × 5.5m, to an average depth of 0.06m. Beneath this deposit, the area was divided by a dwarf support wall (1007) (**Figs. 2 & 3; Plates 1 & 2**) orientated E-W and measuring >5.6m × 0.5m × 0.4m. This was abutted on either side by levelling deposits (1004) and (1008), which appeared to be contemporary and comprised compact greyish-brown silt with an average depth of 0.38m. These deposits contained frequent stone, rubble, lime mortar and disarticulated human skeletal remains. Underlying these deposits was what appeared to be natural subsoil (1003). It was unclear without further excavation whether wall (1007) directly overlay this subsoil or cut into it.



Plate 1: View W of Area 1 showing wall (1007)



Plate 2: View N of Area 1 showing elevation of wall (1007)

- 5.3 Area 2, located at the E end of the nave, adjacent to the raised entrance to the chancel, extended 6.3m N-S, 1.1m E-W and was excavated to a depth of approximately 0.6m. Eleven contexts were identified in this area, the uppermost of which was a tiled floor (2001) measuring 0.02m in thickness, which overlay a modern indurated cement concrete floor surface measuring 0.06m in thickness (2002). Either abutting this surface or abutted by it was a flagstone surface (2003) extending 2.1m x >0.3m x 0.08m, which overlay a reddish-brown silty clay extending 2.4m x >0.3m x 0.07m (2004).
- 5.4 Beneath this current floor level (comprising of the flagstone and tiled flooring) were rubble foundation deposits (2007, 2008) (**Figs. 2 & 4; Plate 3**), supporting the chancel arch piers. The area between the two foundation deposits held a heavily disturbed mid brown clay silt deposit containing some disarticulated and partially articulated human skeletal remains, suggesting earlier burials had been disturbed during later activity (2005) (**Figs. 2 & 4; Plates 4 & 5**) presumably associated with the Victorian rebuilding of the chancel in 1863-4. The construction cuts for both rubble foundation deposits ([2009], [2010]) appeared to cut natural subsoil.
- 5.5 During Phase 2 of the archaeological observation, an area of approximate 8m E-W x 7.5m N-S was excavated to the S of the church (and W of the S porch) to an average depth of 0.4m.

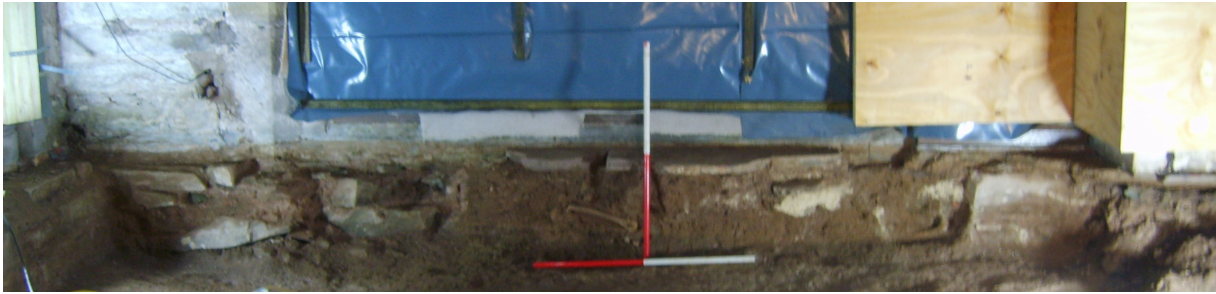


Plate 3: View E showing Phase 1 Area 2 section revealing rubble foundations (2007) & (2008)

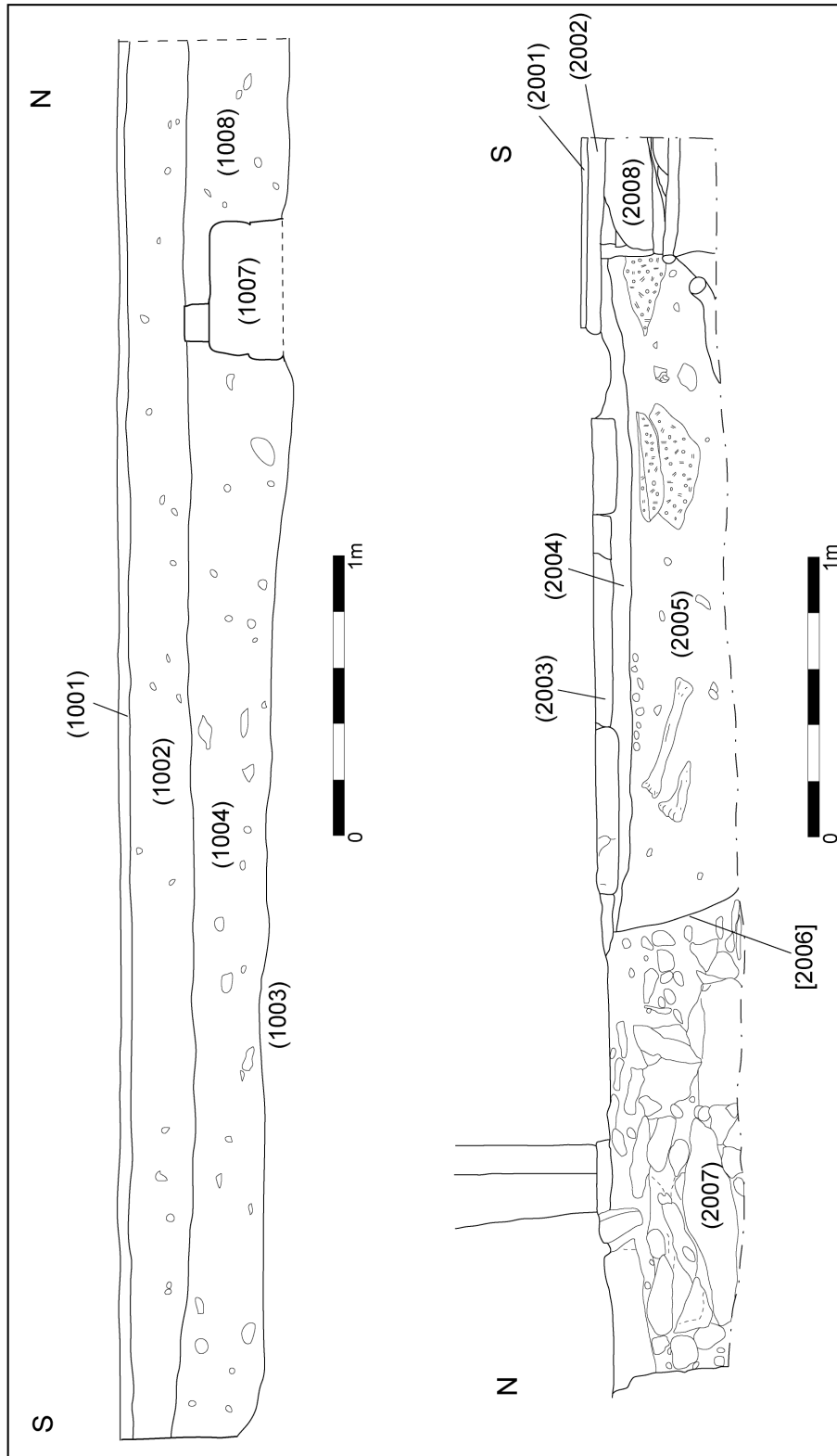


Plate 4: View E of Phase 1 Area 2 section showing disturbed deposit (2005)



Plate 5: View E of Phase 1 Area 2 section showing partially articulated remains within (2005)

- 5.6 Six contexts were identified in this area, the uppermost of which was a friable mid greyish-brown sandy silt topsoil deposit extending across the whole area (8m × 7.5m) to an average depth of 0.24m (001). This overlay a mid yellowish-brown sandy silt (002) also extending across the entire area (8m × 7.5m) to an average depth of 0.3m (as revealed). This deposit contained a large amount of disarticulated human remains and a moderate amount of nails (presumably coffin nails), along with eight repositioned headstones. These were neither *in situ* nor related to any identified grave cut; most were damaged and incomplete. This deposit was heavily disturbed and appeared to relate to Victorian landscaping activity associated with the restoration of the church.



Figs. 3 & 4: E-facing section of Area 1 (Phase 1) & W-facing section of Area 2 (Phase 1)

- 5.7 An irregular linear feature [003] located in the NE corner of the excavation area cut landscaping deposit (002). This feature extended 1.15m E-W × 0.60m N-S; the W end revealed a rounded terminus while a later (modern) water pipe trench [005 truncated] the E end. The linear was filled by loose (voided in places) dark yellowish-brown sandy silt, which also contained disarticulated human remains and bone fragments, and probably related to Victorian landscaping activity.
- 5.8 Pipe trench [005] ran NW–SE across the E end of the reduced area and measured approximately 7m (as revealed) × 0.25m × 0.2m (average depth). This modern feature was filled by builders' sand and truncated linear [003],



Plate 6: View W of Phase 2 ground reduction, showing deposit (002)

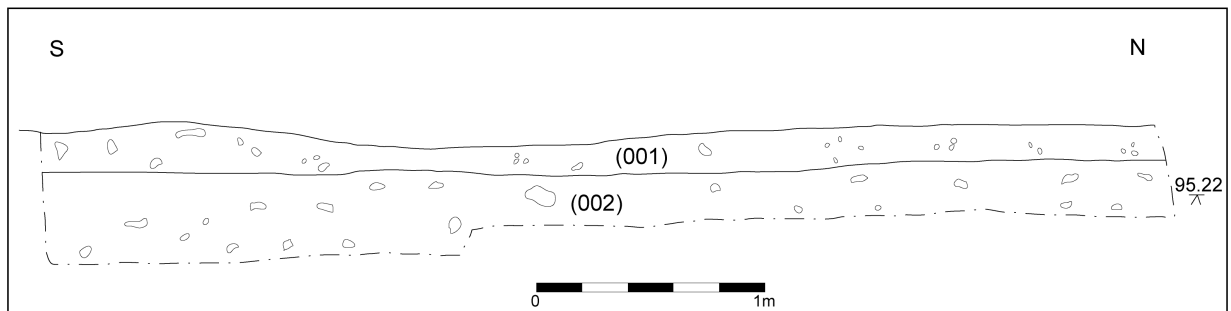


Fig 5: E-facing section of Phase 2 reduced



Plate 7: View W showing E-facing section of Phase 2 reduced area

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Phase 1 of the archaeological observation revealed evidence of the programme of restoration work undertaken in 1863-4, including the installation of heating ducts.
- 6.2 Levelling/make-up deposits (1004) and (1008) contained large quantities of disarticulated human skeletal remains, in addition to iron coffin fixtures, handles and nails, occasional redeposited medieval green-glaze pottery and post-medieval pottery, CBM and clay pipe, suggesting that much of this make-up material was imported into the church from the immediate vicinity.
- 6.3 Deposit (2005) also contained human bone, including the partial remains of two or more individuals (mainly comprising leg bones). Some of the bones removed from beneath the centre of the section appeared to be articulated, suggesting they were early burials disturbed by later activity, probably associated with the rebuilding of the chancel in 1863-4.
- 6.4 Archaeological observation of the Phase 2 groundworks immediately to the W of the S porch revealed evidence of landscaping activity, again presumably associated with the mid Victorian restoration works.



7. Copyright

- 7.1 Border Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepted that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification.

8. Bibliography

Herefordshire Archaeology Sites and Monuments Record; SMR printout

IfA, 2001, *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*

Pevsner, N., 1963, *The Buildings of England: Herefordshire*, London

RCHME, 1934, *Inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Herefordshire*, **Vol. 3**, North West, London

Tyers, I., 2002, *Tree-ring analysis of timbers from the bell tower of the church of St Leonard, Yarpole, Herefordshire*, unpublished report.

9. Appendix: Context Register

PHASE 1 – AREA 1	
Context No	Description
(1001)	Loose to moderately compact reddish-orange sand extending 6.5m x 5.5m to an average depth of 0.03m. Overlies (1002)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Building sand forming levelling deposit for existing floor surface</i>
(1002)	Moderately compact reddish-brown silty sand extending 6.5m x 5.5m to an average depth of 0.06m. Underlies (1001), overlies (1004), (1008)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Levelling deposit for existing floor surface</i>
(1003)	Very well compacted mid greyish-brown silty clay extending >6.5m x >5.5m. Physically underlies (1004) & (1008). Stratigraphically underlies (1007).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Natural</i>
(1004)	Moderately compact greyish-brown silt containing frequent stone, rubble, lime mortar & disarticulated human skeletal remains extending >5.5m x 4m x 0.35m (average depth). Underlies (1002), overlies (1003), same as (1008). Abuts (1007).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Levelling deposit to raise floor surface of church to height of support wall (1007)</i>
(1005)	VOID
(1006)	VOID
(1007)	3 (visible) courses of randomly coursed & bonded rough-hewn masonry orientated E-W measuring >5.6m x 0.5m x >0.4m. Abutted by (1004) & (1008), overlies (1003).
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Dwarf masonry wall serving as support for Victorian flooring</i>
(1008)	Moderately compact greyish-brown silt containing frequent stone, rubble, lime mortar & disarticulated human skeletal remains extending 5.5m x 2.2m x 0.38m (average depth). Underlies (1002), abuts wall (1007), same as (1004)
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Levelling deposit to raise floor surface of church to height of existing wall (1007)</i>
PHASE 1 – AREA 2	
Context No	Description
(2001)	Ceramic tile floor extending >0.8m x >1.1m x 0.02m. Overlies (2002), abuts/abutted by flagstone surface (2003)
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Modern tile floor</i>
(2002)	Indurated concrete deposit extending >0.8m x >1.1m x 0.06m. Underlies (2001), overlies (2008), abuts/abutted by flagstone surface (2003).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Concrete levelling pad for tile floor</i>
(2003)	Single flagstone course measuring 2.1m N-S, x >0.3m E-W x 0.08m. Overlies (2004), abuts/abutted by tile flooring (2001) & concrete pad (2003).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Possible flagstone flooring or step to raised area at entrance to chancel</i>
(2004)	Moderately compact reddish-brown silty clay, moderate small rounded stones, extending 2.4m x >0.3m x 0.07m. Underlies (2003), overlies (2005), fills [2006]
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Levelling deposit/sub-base for flagstone surface (2003)</i>
(2005)	Moderately compact mid to light brown clayey silt, moderate large subangular stones, occasional small sub-rounded stones & gravels, occasional patches of powdered lime, frequent human bone, extending 2.4m x >0.3m x 0.37m (average thickness). Underlies (2004), fills (2006).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Deposit formed as a result of ground disturbance; earlier burials disturbed by later excavations. Human remains no longer in situ.</i>

[2006]	Cut, form and extent unknown, revealed dimensions 2.4m x >0,3m x 0.4m. Cuts (2007), (2009), filled by (2005).
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Substantial cut resulting from later disturbance of earlier burials.</i>
(2007)	Moderately compact to firm dark reddish-brown silt, very frequent large, medium & small subangular stones, extending >1.7m x >0.3m x >0.45m. Fills [2009], physically underlies (2004), cut by [2006]
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Rubble foundation material</i>
(2008)	Moderately compacted to firm dark reddish-brown silt, very frequent large, medium & small subangular stones extending >0.4m x >0.3m x >0.45m. Fills [2010], physically underlies (2002), cut by [2006]
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Rubble foundation material</i>
[2009]	Cut, not excavated
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Construction cut for wall foundations (2007)</i>
[2010]	Cut, not excavated
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Construction cut for wall foundations (2008)</i>
(2011)	Compact mid greyish-brown silty clay extending >2.6m x >1.1m x >0.25m. Physically underlies (2005), cut by [2009], [2010], [2006].
<i>INTERPRETATION</i>	<i>Natural</i>
PHASE 2	
Context No	Description
(001)	Friable mid greyish-brown sandy silt, moderate small sub-rounded stones, extending >8m x > 7.5m x 0.15m (average depth). Overlies (002).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Upper soil horizon within churchyard</i>
(002)	Friable mid yellowish-brown sandy silt, very frequent disarticulated human skeletal remains, occasional CBM fragments, frequent small & medium subangular stones, extends >8m x >7.5m x >0.3m. Underlies (001), cut by [003] & [005].
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Mid Victorian landscaping deposit</i>
[003]	E-W cut forming slightly irregular linear with rounded terminus at W end, E end truncated by later cut [005]. Extent as revealed 1.15m E-W x 0.6m N-S x 0.28m (maximum depth). Break of slope top moderate, sides steeply sloping, break of slope base moderate, base slightly concave. Cuts [002], filled by (004).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Irregular cut relating to Victorian landscaping</i>
(004)	Loose (voiding in places) dark yellowish-brown sandy silt, occasional disarticulated human remains & bone fragments, extent as revealed 1.15m x 0.6m x 0.28m. Fills [003]
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Victorian landscaping deposit/ fill</i>
(005)	NW-SE linear cut. Extent as revealed 7m x 0.25m x 0.2m. Break of slope top sharp, sides vertical, break of slope base sharp, base flat. Cuts (004) & (002), filled by (006).
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Trench cut for modern water pipe</i>
(006)	Deposit of building sand extending 7m x 0.25m x 0.2m. Fills [005]
<i>INTERPRETATION:</i>	<i>Backfill of modern water pipe trench</i>



Site Summary

Report Name & Title	Archaeological Observation: St Leonard's Church Yarpole Hfds
Contractors Name and Address	Border Archaeology PO Box 36 Leominster Herefordshire HR6 OYQ
Site Name	St Leonard's Church Yarpole Herefordshire
Grid Reference (8 fig)	NGR: SO 4695 6483
SMR number/s of site	4925
Date of Fieldwork	Jan 26 th to Feb 2 nd 09 (Phase 1) and Apr 22 nd to 24 th 09 (Phase 2)
Date of Report	June 2009
	NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS
Pottery	Occasional (redeposited) medieval sherds; post-medieval sherds
Human bone	Disarticulated & fragmentary human skeletal remains
Coffin fixtures	Occasional handles, nails
CBM, clay pipe	Occasional fragmentary examples
	NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED
Samples collected for plant macrofossil assessment	None
C14/scientific dates	No and type: N/A Result: N/A
Pollen	No of columns/spot samples: N/A Name of pollen specialist: N/A
Bone	Number of buckets sieved for bone: N/A Quantity recovered: N/A Period: N/A
Insect	No of columns/spot samples: N/A Name of pollen specialist: N/A
Other	Type and specialist: N/A
Summary of the report	<p>Archaeological observation of groundworks relating to the conversion of the western part of the nave for use as a village shop and post office was carried out within the interior of St Leonard's Church, Yarpole, Herefordshire, (Phase 1) and was followed by further observation of groundworks outside the church immediately SW of the porch (Phase 2).</p> <p>No finds or features of archaeological significance were observed during either Phase 1 or Phase 2 of the groundworks.</p>



Document Control

Job title	Archaeological Observation: St Leonard's Church Yarpole Herefordshire	Job No	BA0901SLPCCYC
Report written by	<i>Michelle Bithell BA AIfA</i>		
Report edited by	<i>George Children MA MIfA</i>		
Issue No	Status	Date	Approved for issue
1	Final	June 2009	<i>Neil Shurety Dip.M. G.M.Inst.M</i>