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Archaeological Observation

Church of St Andrew

Leysters

Herefordshire

January 2015

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Report Ref:

BA1456ACLH

Grid Reference:

NGR: SO 56839 63247

Date: 12th January 2015

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1 Executive Summary

*Border Archaeology was commissioned by Mrs *, Secretary of the Parish Council of Leysters in the diocese of Hereford to carry out archaeological observation of drainage trenching at the north and west end of St Andrews Church.*

At no point did the depth of the trench exceed 0.30m. It seems likely that, for this reason, no deposits or finds of archaeological significance were observed during the work, although the stone foundations of the church were revealed at the west end of the building.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology was commissioned by Mrs *, Secretary of the Parish Council of Leysters, in the diocese of Hereford to undertake archaeological observation of drainage trenching located on the W and N side of the parish church of Leysters in Herefordshire (*fig. 1*). The Church of St Andrew lies about 1km to the SE of the village centre at a height of 191mOD. Archaeological work took place on the morning of the December 5th 2014.

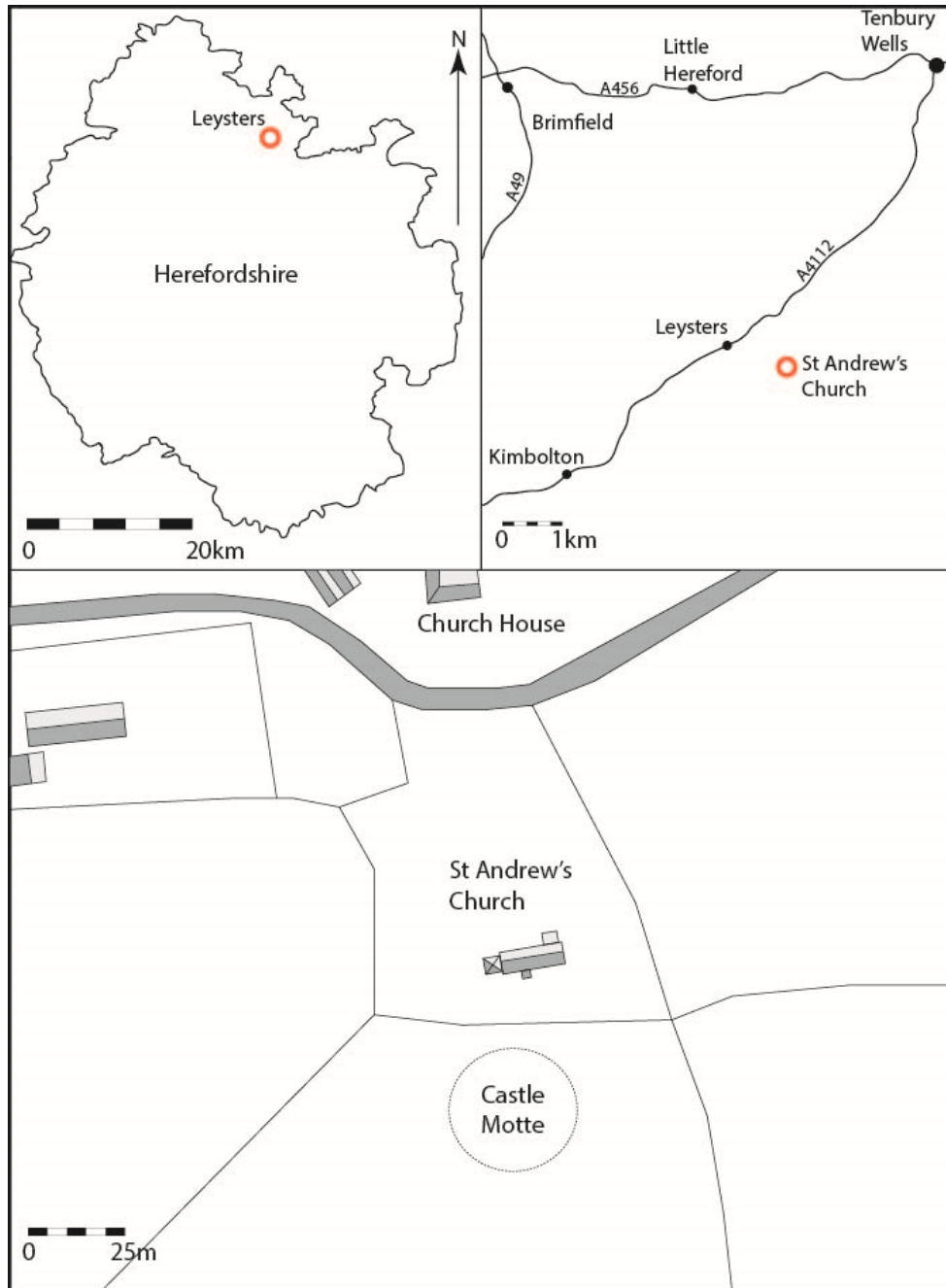


Figure 1: Site Location

2.1 Soils & Geology

Bedrock geology consists of Lower Devonian Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone beneath superficial deposits of glacial sand and gravel (British Geological Survey).

3 Brief Historical and Archaeological Background

At the time of the Domesday Survey Leysters was held by Roger of Mussegros. It was previously held by Arngrim and Arketel, as two manors. It was previously valued at 4s, but at the time of the survey it was waste.

Immediately to the S of St Andrews church is a ringwork, probably a motte. It measures 27m in diameter with the top standing some 2-4m above the surrounding ground. The ditch is about 9m wide and up to 1.1m deep. An excavation early in the 20th century found only burnt material and stone. There is no evidence for a bailey and it is possible that the castle was not completed. It certainly seems likely that it was short lived and did not reach the stage of being reconstructed in stone as a visit by the Woolhope Club in 1993 noted that there was no evidence for stonework in the ditch. This was taken to suggest that the castle did not progress beyond the timber stage.

The church itself contains elements dating to the Norman period, including a blocked Norman window on the N side. The S doorway is also Norman in date, with a shouldered lintel and a tympanum. The W tower dates to the earlier part of the 13th century while the roof is of 14th century date (Pevsner, 1963:213). The nave is of 12th century date with the chancel possibly dating to the 13th century. The church was restored in the 19th century when the S wall was rebuilt. Two of the three bells date to the middle part of the 15th century and the font, of 12th century date, on a later medieval base, may have come from Pudleston (www.achurchnearyou.com/leysters-st-andrew0/).

The church lies at a distance of c. 1km from the centre of the present village, but 'slight but clearly marked' house platforms and hollow ways to the E of the church (Hickling 1970:176) indicate that the village was originally a nucleated settlement centred on the church.

No recent archaeological work is thought to have taken place on or near to the site itself.

4 Methodology

Drainage work involved the excavation, using a mini-digger, of a small trench, to be filled with stone. The trench ran on an E/W alignment, for some 18m on the N side of the church, and 0.34m from the church wall, turning to the S at the NW corner of the building (Figure 2). The trench was 0.25m wide and at no point exceeded a depth of 0.30m. Work was carried out by the contractor throughout, with all intrusive ground-works subject to archaeological observation.

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2014). Records included:

- A *pro-forma* context record for each stratigraphic unit
- Plans of excavated areas showing: the extent of the area (tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid), the extent of all stratigraphic units and appropriate detail within stratigraphic units.
- A photographic record of all stratigraphic units, in addition to a representative photographic record of the progress of the archaeological work. The record was made using a high-resolution digital camera and each photograph contained an appropriate scale; all photographic records were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view were maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

A plan was produced on gridded, archivally stable polyester film.

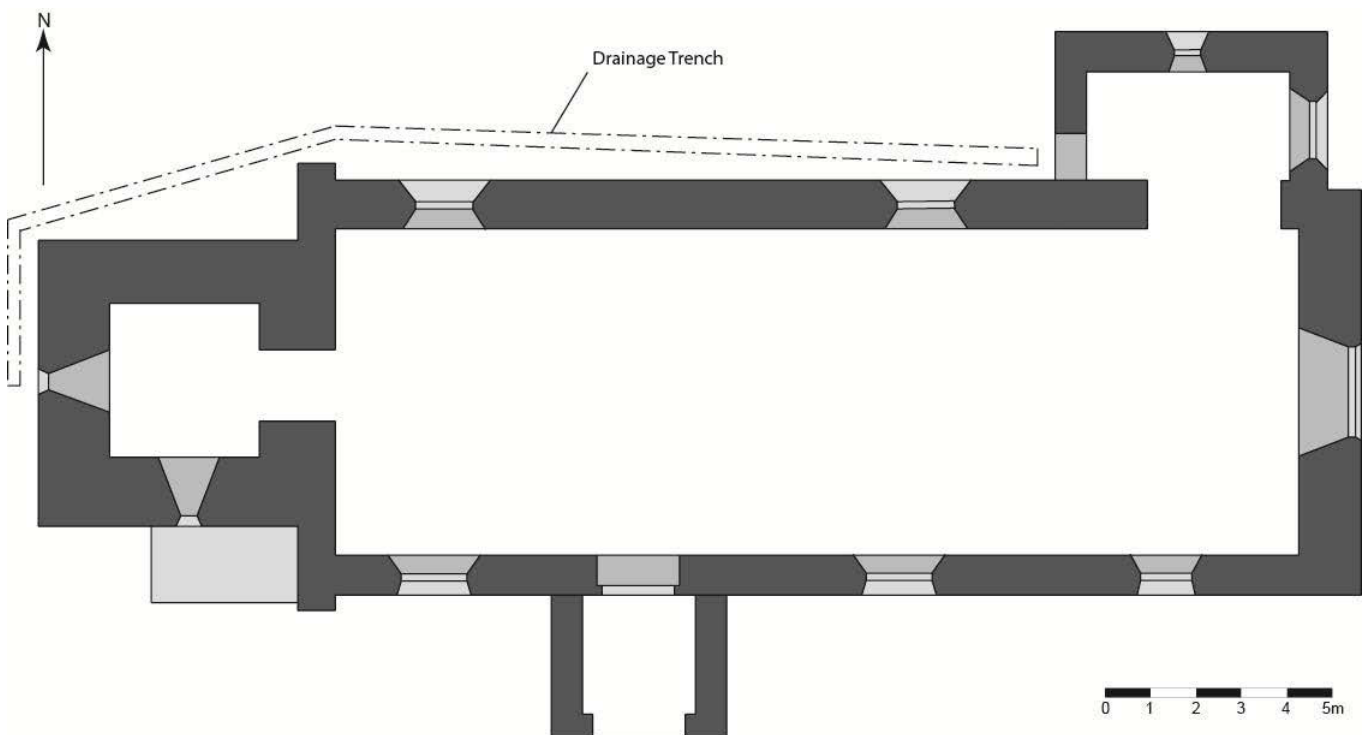


Figure 2: location of trench

5 Results

The topsoil (101), present throughout, was a mid red brown silt clay with mortar and lime flecks about 0.20m deep across the site. A single human incisor was observed in the base of the trench and occasional sherds of transfer printed ware (19th century or later) were also seen in this deposit. Beneath it, (102) was a bright red

brown stony silt subsoil, greater than 0.10m deep and extending beneath the excavated depth of the trench. At the W end of the church, in order to avoid damaging the path to the S door, the trench ran immediately adjacent to the building and the stone footing (103) of the W tower was visible in the E side of the trench (Plate 1). The foundations were of roughly shaped sandstone and extended into the trench for a distance of 0.23m from the wall of the tower.

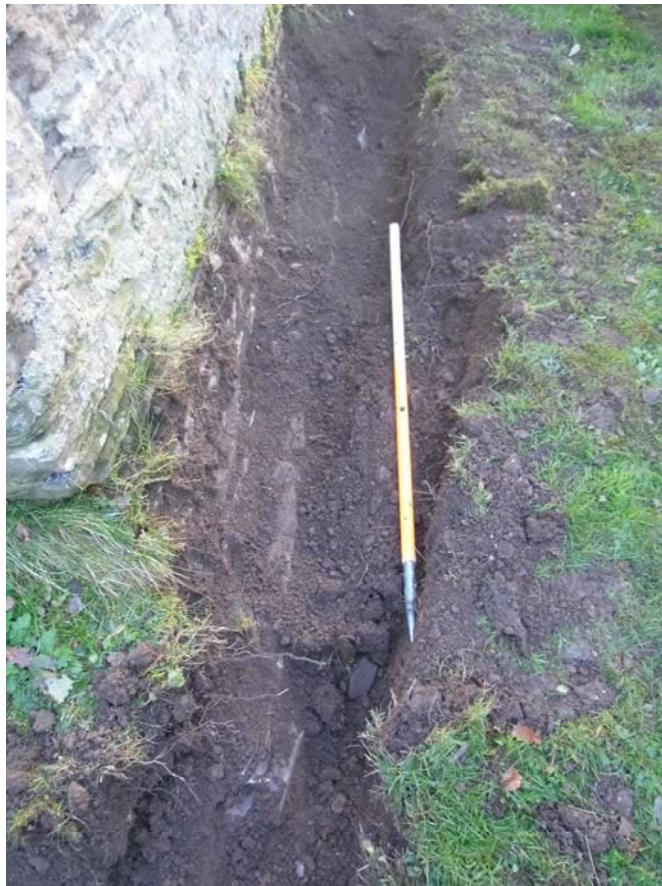


Plate 1: The 13th century foundations of the W tower: view S

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7 Bibliography

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Herefordshire through Time (htt.herefordshire.gov.uk)

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|--|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Report title: St Andrew's Church, Leysters, Herefordshire | | Report Ref: | |
| Archaeological Observation | | BA: 1456ACLH | |
| Report written by | K. H. Crooks | | |
| Reported edited by | George Children MA MiFA | | |
| Issue No. | Status | Date | Approved for issue |
| 1 | Final | January 2015 | Neil Shurety |