

CHURCH OF ST. HELEN, KIRMINGTON, NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING OF GROUNDWORKS WITHIN THE CHURCHYARD AND TOWER

2019

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SUMMARY

- During 2018, Matt Hurford Historic Buildings and Archaeological Services was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology to carry out archaeological monitoring at the Grade II* listed Church of St. Helen, Main Street, Kirmington, North Lincolnshire centred on National Grid Reference TA 10597 11297. The work is in response to the insertion of toilet facilities into the tower and associated service trenches extending through the churchyard.
- The objective of the archaeological work was to ensure that any archaeological information present was recorded appropriately and the results presented within a report.
- The groundworks were excavated by staff of the main contractor under the observation of the archaeologist (watching brief).
- St. Helen's Church has a 13th century ironstone tower of three stages with bell openings of two lancets under one arch. It has a chamfered plinth and angle buttresses to the first two stages. The north and south aisles were demolished in 1742 and 1744 respectively and the roof lowered in 1789. The copper spire dates to 1838. With the exception of the tower the remaining exterior fabric was extensively restored, or built, by S. S. Teulon in 1859-60 including the partial rebuilding of the chancel. Inside, the north arcade of four bays dates to the early 14th century. It has quatrefoil piers with deep continuous hollows in the diagonals with fillets. The double-chamfered arches have capitals of much note carved in the shape of heads and busts including a bishop, a crowned head and a *signum tricriput*. The south arcade has octagonal piers and double-chamfered arches. A no longer extant boiler house was erected against the north wall of the tower to provide heating for the church between the publication of the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 and the 1907 edition map.
- The groundworks comprised excavation of Areas 01-03. Area 01 extended from Main Street by the north-west corner of the churchyard to Area 02 located to the north of the church tower. It was up to 0.45m in width, 0.9m in depth and was 63m in length. Area 02 extended to the north from the north wall of the church tower. It was up to 0.45m in width, 0.9m in depth and was 9m in length. Area 03 was located within the church tower with the groundworks comprising the lowering of the floor level by up to 0.4m.
- Areas 01 and 02 both had a basic stratigraphic sequence comprising top soil, graveyard soil and natural substrata. To the north of the tower, walling relating to the former Victorian/Edwardian boiler house was encountered. In Area 03 the 13th century foundations for the tower were exposed beneath a deposit containing disarticulated skeletal material which had been truncated by features and deposits relating to the heating system associated with the former boiler house.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. During 2018, Matt Hurford Historic Buildings and Archaeological Services was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology to carry out archaeological monitoring during the excavation of groundworks at the Church of St. Helen, Kirmington, North Lincolnshire centred on National Grid Reference TA 10597 11297 (Figure 1).

1.2. The investigation was carried out in accordance with faculty requirements (Faculty Number 2018/35). The archive will be deposited with the North Lincolnshire Museum Services under the archaeological site code KMBY.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1. The objective of the archaeological work was:

- To ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme and the recording of any archaeological remains encountered during the groundworks and the results presented within a report (preservation by record).

2.2. The proposed work comprised:

- The excavation of Area 01, a trench extending from Main Street by the north-west corner of the churchyard to Area 02 located to the north of the church tower. It was up to 0.45m in width, 0.9m in depth and was 63m in length (Figure 2).
- The excavation of Area 02, a trench extending to the north from the north wall of the church tower. It was up to 0.45m in width, 0.9m in depth and was 9m in length (Figure 2).
- The excavation of Area 03, the lowering of the ground level within the church tower by up to 0.4m (Figure 2).

2.4. The groundworks were excavated by staff of the main contractor under the observation by the archaeologist (watching brief).

2.5. The recording was to result in 'the preparation of a report and ordered archive', in line with the guidelines of the CIFA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, (Standard and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief published December 2014).

3. SITE BACKGROUND

3.1. The village of Kirmington lies at TA 10597 11297 around 13 miles to the west of Grimsby. The British Geological Survey shows that the underlying bedrock geology is Welton Chalk Formation with superficial deposits of Devensian Till (<http://maps.mappapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home/html>).

3.2. History & Fabric

3.2.1. An early Roman fort (Pevsner *et al* 1989, 419) and an extensive Romano-British settlement is present at Kirmington with many discoveries made during the construction of the Second World War airfield base to the south-west of the village. In addition to the Roman material, Germanic metalwork dating from the late 4th century or early 5th century and 6th century has been found on the site (Knowles and Everson 1978, 123).

3.2.2. The name Kirmington, *Chermitone* in Domesday Book of 1086, is derived from *the tun of Cynemaers people* with the village first being recorded as Kirmington in Episcopal Registers in 1225 (Ekwall 1987, 280-1).

3.2.3. St. Helen's Church has a 13th century ironstone tower of three stages with bell openings of two lancets under one arch. It has a chamfered plinth and angle buttresses to the first two stages. The north

and south aisles were demolished in 1742 and 1744 respectively and the roof lowered in 1789 (List Entry Number 1204677). The copper spire dates to 1838 (Pevsner *et al* 1989, 419) With the exception of the tower the remaining exterior fabric was extensively restored, or built, by S. S. Teulon in 1859-60 including the partial rebuilding of the chancel (List Entry Number 1204677). Inside, the north arcade of four bays dates to the early 14th century. It has quatrefoil piers with deep continuous hollows in the diagonals with fillets. The double-chamfered arches have capitals of much note carved in the shape of heads and busts including a bishop, a crowned head and a *signum triciput* (List Entry Number 1204677). The south arcade has octagonal piers and double-chamfered arches. A no longer extant boiler house was erected against the north wall of the tower to provide heating for the church between the publication of the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 and the 1907 edition map.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. The groundwork was carried out under archaeological observation. All deposits exposed were inspected in order to identify any archaeological remains of interest in particular those medieval or earlier in date, (including any church foundations). Where possible these were cleaned by hand, examined and recorded.

4.2. Recording of all groundworks included the position and depths of the excavations and the deposits exposed, by drawing (both in section and plan where applicable) and photograph.

4.3. Prior to backfilling spoil heaps were inspected for any datable or significant archaeological artefacts.

4.4. All identifiable deposits were given unique individual four-digit context numbers e.g. 0001, 0002 etc. starting at 0001.

4.5. All saved artefacts were to be given individual three letter finds codes e.g. AAA, AAB.

4.6. Disarticulated human remains found in the confines of the work were to be recorded appropriately and left on site for reburial. Advice from the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Lincoln would be sought if articulated remains were present

5. RESULTS

5.1. The groundworks comprised excavation of Areas 01-03. Area 01 extended from Main Street by the north-west corner of the churchyard to Area 02 located to the north of the church tower. It was up to 0.45m in width, 0.9m in depth and was 63m in length. Area 02 extended to the north from the north wall of the church tower. It was up to 0.45m in width, 0.9m in depth and was 9m in length. Area 03 was located within the church and comprised the lowering of the ground level within the tower by up to 0.4m.

5.2. Area 01 (Figure 2-4 and Plates 1-2)

5.2.1. The excavation of Area 01 revealed a basic stratigraphy of three deposits comprising topsoil 0100, graveyard soil 0101 and natural substrata 0102. The topsoil 0100, which extended to a depth of up to 0.2m, consisted of a weak brown silt loam with small quantities of stone. Graveyard soil 0101 was a 0.26m thick layer of weak brown silt loam with small amounts of stone and chalk. Strong yellowish red clay with numerous chalk pieces, natural substrata 0102, was encountered at a depth of 0.46m.

5.2.2. At the western end of the trench at a depth of between 0.3m and 0.55m a layer of pinkish white limestone hardcore was encountered which is likely to be a former path depicted on earlier Ordnance Survey maps as extending from the north-west entrance into the churchyard to the doorway in the south aisle.

5.2.3 Truncating layers 0101 and 0102 to the north of the north-west tower buttress was the north to south orientated brick and chalk wall 0106 of the former boiler house. The wall was bonded with yellow mortar and in a foundation trench lined with orange sand. To the east of the wall beneath the top soil was chalk rubble 0104, material used to backfill the boiler house following its demolition. To the south-west of the wall was a modern drain 0105 which cut the rubble backfill.

5.3. Area 02 (Figure 2-3 and Plate 3)

5.3.1. The excavation of Area 02 revealed the same basic stratigraphic sequence as Area 01 comprising topsoil 0200, graveyard soil 0202 and natural substrata 0203. An additional 0.2m thick layer 0201, comprising charcoal and coal was present beneath the topsoil extending northwards from wall 0204 for a distance of 2.4m. This coal rich layer is presumably material originating from the boiler house. Truncating the graveyard soil and natural substrata was a west to east orientated brick wall 0204 and a north to south orientated brick wall 0205, features relating to the former boiler house. Both were constructed of bricks measuring 9 x 4½ x 3 inches and bonded with grey concrete mortar. Plastic sheeting had been laid over the top of the demolished wall 0205. Chalk rubble 0206, the same as 0106, had been used to backfill the structure.

5.4. Area 03 (Figure 2-3, 5-7 and Plates 4-6)

5.4.1. Area 03 was located within the church tower, the entire floor of which was reduced by up to 0.4m. The floor comprised red and black tiles 0309, each measuring 9 x 9 inches and 1 inch thick, arranged in a diamond pattern. The tiles were bedded into a concrete layer 0310 that was up to 20mm thick beneath which was a weak brown sandy silt loam levelling layer 0311. Beneath 0311 and extending across the whole area was weak brown sandy silt loam layer 0302 which contained small quantities of skeletal material that was retained by the contractor for reburial on site. Truncating 0302 in the eastern part of the area was brick feature 0305 and additional deposits 0303, 0304, 0306 and 0307 associated with the Victorian/Edwardian heating system. Therefore, the layers above 0302 post-date the insertion of the heating system. Deposit 0302 overlaid the 13th century stepped tower foundations 0300/0301. The upper part of the foundation 0300 is a single course of ironstone blocks, generally dressed, which was exposed beneath the north, west and south-west wall of the tower. The stones were up to 0.7m in length, exceeded 0.26m in width and were up to 0.15m thick. Small pockets of loose light reddish sand bonding material were present. The lower course of the foundation, 0301 was only exposed extending along the north wall. It was built predominantly of unworked limestone blocks with the same bonding material as 0300. In the north-west corner of the area foundation 0300/0301 and the tower wall was truncated by feature 0308 which provided access for a former pipe extending between the boiler house and the tower.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. The archaeological work has identified the 13th century foundations of the tower. In addition, walls relating to the no longer extant Victorian/Edwardian boiler house abutting the exterior north wall of the tower were encountered and associated deposits and features within the tower.

6.2. There was a complete absence of *in situ* burials probably due to the relatively shallow nature of the trenches. In addition, no artefacts were found in any of the three areas.

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