

Brief for Archaeological evaluation at St Barnabas Church, Althamstone, Braintree



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Essex County Council



Title: Archaeological evaluation on land at St Barnabas Church, Alphamstone, Braintree

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This archaeological brief is only valid for six months. After this period the Historic Environment (HE) Advisor should be contacted to assess if any changes need to be made. Any written scheme of investigation resulting from this brief shall only be considered for the same period.

The contractor is advised to visit the site before completing their written scheme of investigation as there may be implications for accurately costing the project.

1. Introduction

This brief for archaeological trial trenching and excavation has been prepared by the Historic Environment Advisor of Essex County Council. The brief sets out the requirements for archaeological investigation of new underground services and a replacement shed within the grounds of the Church of St Barnabas, Alphamstone.

This document forms the basis for any Written Scheme of Investigation submitted by an archaeological contractor for approval by this office on behalf of the Diocese.

2. Site Location and Description

Saint Barnabas Church lies within the village of Alphamstone (TL87878 35461) near the junction of Goulds Road and Lamarsh Hill. The proposed works are within the grounds of the church which lies adjacent to a scheduled monument. The Church sits upon raised ground and boreholes have revealed a substantial thickness of made ground from ground level of between 0.5m and 0.8m depth. The proposed works are anticipated to extend no further than the depth of the made ground.

3. Planning Background

Prior to a faculty application and planning application being submitted to Braintree District Council for the new underground services and proposed new shed within the grounds of the Church Historic England have recommended an archaeological evaluation be carried out due to the proximity to a scheduled monument and the potential for significant archaeological remains to be preserved within the churchyard. A meeting has been held with representatives from the Diocesan, Historic England, the architect and the Historic Environment Advisor for Braintree District Council to agree upon a suitable mitigation strategy prior to the planning application.

4. Archaeological Background

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford. Prospective contractors are advised to obtain the EHER data prior to the completion of any archaeological written scheme of investigation.

The Church of St Barnabas lies on a platform above the surrounding fields, and has yielded Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery and remains associated with a Roman villa.

The original dedication of the Grade I Listed Saint Barnabas Church is not known. The nave walls are nearly 1m thick and are thought almost certainly to date to the Pre-Conquest period. The site is considered a prime location for an Anglo-Saxon Minster. The south aisle and chancel are 14th century. At the centre of the north wall, a pocket of the face of the wall is made up with skulls and long bones at ground-level.

Roman pottery, mostly of 1st century date, including a fragment of dish in a Gallo-Belgic form, has been found in the churchyard; also a bronze needle, a coin of Valerian and another, probably of Magentius. The south edge of the churchyard is on the line of a rubble and mortar wall believed to be Roman in date. This undoubtedly forms part of the scheduled Roman villa complex immediately to the south of the churchyard (SAM no 24872). The villa was identified through a surface scatter of building material and pottery within the plough-soil, marking the site of buried wall foundations, pits and ditches. A cropmark recorded at NGR: TL 8787 3540 marks the location of one of the main buildings.

Many sarsen stones have been gathered to the area and are distributed in and about the churchyard which has led to speculation that they once formed part of a prehistoric stone circle. Stone circles are a phenomenon of the Neolithic and Bronze Age and are often surrounded by Bronze Age burials. Many Bronze Age burial urns have been discovered in and around the Churchyard and in a field to the west and are thought to form part of an Early Bronze Age cremation cemetery. Two large sarsens have actually been incorporated into the church foundations. This suggests that the building of the church on this site was a deliberate attempt to Christianise a pagan site.

In 2007 three test-holes were hand dug by Colchester Archaeological Trust at the northern side of the nave. These encountered features and layers, some pre-dating the construction of the nave. Of principal interest was an east-west aligned inhumation burial. The orientation of the human remains in the grave cut by Test-hole 1 suggests that the deceased was a Christian. The burial pre-dates the building of the nave which is Norman or earlier. The site of the Roman villa nearby, the Roman finds from the churchyard and the exposed Roman layer in Test-hole 2 make it possible that the burial is late Roman, however this would be considered unusual and the burial is more likely to be of Anglo-Saxon or Norman date. A Roman layer or feature fill in one of the test-holes may have been part of a large pit or ditch, perhaps a rubbish-pit associated with the nearby villa. Residual Roman pottery and

tile was also found in later layers. The nave foundation was seen to extend to between 400 and 500mm below ground-level and to be of un-mortared stone and earth construction.

Of significance to the depth of made ground within the churchyard is the fact that the church foundations had not been dug through undisturbed natural clay. In each of the three test-holes, the foundation was sitting on top of cut features or a layer. All these features/layers obviously pre-date the construction of the nave which is Norman or earlier and so the layers of made ground known to exist within the churchyard may be of some antiquity.

5. Requirement for Work

The archaeological work will comprise the excavation of a machine dug trench in the location of the trench arch drain to the depth of the drain specifications. The footprint of the trench arch will be approx. 9.0m x1.0m and 0.5m deep, the exact position is to be agreed with the parish and architect. The trench should be dug in spits in order to collect and assess the nature of the 'made ground', this should continue until the required depth for the trench arch drain is reached unless any archaeological layers or features are encountered. Excavation will cease until the layer or features have been investigated. Any features revealed will need to be planned and excavated.

Specific attention should be made to the potential for:

- Evidence of Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman or later occupation
- Evidence of earlier phases of the church, including the possible Anglo-Saxon Minster
- Evidence of grave cuts.

The initial work will comprise the trial trenching which will be followed by a summary report. This will inform on the depth and nature of the made ground and the impact of the remaining scheme on any surviving archaeological remains and may lead to further archaeological work.

6. General Methodology

- 6.1 A professional team of field archaeologists shall undertake the archaeological work.
- 6.2 The number of staff involved and the structure of the team shall be stated in the written scheme of investigation. Notification of the supervisor/project manager's name for the project shall be

provided to the Historic Environment Advisor at Place Services one week in advance of commencement of work.

- 6.3 The archaeological contractor is expected to follow the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 6.4 The contractor shall ensure detailed study of all mains' service locations and avoid damage to these.
- 6.5 All Health and Safety guidelines must be followed on site.
- 6.6 At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> must be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms. At the end of the project all parts of the OASIS online form must be completed for submission to the HER. This should include an uploaded .PDF version of the entire report.

7. Trial trenching Methodology

- 7.1 Machine stripping shall be undertaken to an agreed standard, using a toothless ditching bucket, and under the supervision and to the satisfaction of a professional archaeologist. The exposed sub-soil or archaeological horizon will be cleaned by hand immediately after machine stripping, if required and any archaeological deposits or negative features planned.
- 7.2 Machine stripping will only be undertaken to the top of the archaeological horizon unless agreement is obtained from the Historic Environment Advisor to deepen the trenches by this method.
- 7.3 The contractor shall provide details of the site surveying, excavation and finds recovery policy in the written scheme of investigation. The site grid shall be tied into the National Grid.
- 7.4 Details of the site planning policy shall be given in the written scheme of investigation. The normal preferred policy for the scale of archaeological site plans is 1:20 and sections at 1:10, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be more appropriate.
- 7.5 The contractor shall provide details of the sampling strategies for retrieving artefacts, biological remains (for palaeoenvironmental and palaeoeconomic investigations), and samples of sediments and/or soils (for micromorphological and other pedological/sedimentological analyses). Advice on the appropriateness of the proposed strategies will be sought from the Historic England Regional Adviser in Archaeological Science (East of England).

- 7.6 Nineteenth century and earlier coffin furniture disturbed by the development shall be collected and reported on. Once recorded all coffin furniture is to be placed in black plastic bags and returned to the Parish for re-interment
- 7.7 Articulated skeletons will be recorded *in situ*, lifted and returned to the Parish for reinterment as a group. Unarticulated bones will be collected and returned to the parish for re-interment.
- 7.8 The photographic record shall include both general and feature specific photographs, a photographic scale (including north arrow) shall be included in the case of detailed photographs. The photographic record shall be accompanied by a photographic register detailing as a minimum feature number, location, and direction of shot.
- 7.9 The site and spoil heaps shall be checked by metal detector, with any finds recovered.
- 7.10 The IFA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*, and the EAA *Standards for Field Archaeology in the Eastern Region* document should be used for additional guidance in the production of the written scheme of investigation, the content of the report, and the general execution of the project.
- 7.11 A meeting will be held on site once the trial trenching has been completed to define the requirements for further work. A summary of the results and a plan of the findings with a completed spot-dating report of all finds will be available at the meeting.**

8. Finds

- 8.1 All finds, where appropriate, shall be washed.
- 8.2 All pottery and other finds where appropriate, shall be marked with the site code and context number.
- 8.3 The written scheme of investigation shall include an agreed list of specialist consultants, who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds, and advise or report on other aspects of the investigation.
- 8.4 The requirements for conservation and storage shall be agreed with the appropriate museum prior to the start of work, and confirmed to the Historic Environment Advisor.

9. Results

- 9.1 The report shall be submitted within a length of time (but not exceeding 3 months) from the end of the fieldwork, to be agreed between the developer and archaeological contractor, with a copy supplied to the Historic Environment Advisor as a single PDF.
- 9.2 This report must contain:
- The aims and methods adopted in the course of the trial trenching and excavation.
 - Location plan of excavated areas in relation to the proposed development. At least two corners of each of the excavated area shall be given 10 figure grid references.

- A section/s drawing showing depth of deposits including present ground level with Ordnance Datum, vertical and horizontal scale.
 - Archaeological methodology and detailed results including a suitable conclusion and discussion. Appropriate discussion and result section assessing the site in relation to the Regional Research Frameworks (Brown and Glazebrook 2000, Medlycott 2011).
 - All specialist reports or assessments
 - A concise non-technical summary of the project results.
- 9.3 An OASIS sheet shall be completed at the end of the project and supplied to the Historic Environment Advisor. This will be completed in digital form. A copy should also be e-mailed to the Hon. Editor of the Essex Archaeology and History Journal for inclusion in the annual round-up of projects in the Journal paul.gilman@me.com
- 9.4 Publication of the results, at least to a summary level (i.e. round up of archaeology in Essex in *Essex Archaeology and History*) shall be undertaken in the year following the archaeological field work. An allowance shall be made within the costs for the report to be published in an adequately peer reviewed journal or monograph series

10. Archive Deposition

- 10.1 The requirements for archive storage shall be agreed with the Braintree museum
- 10.2 If the finds are to remain with the landowner a full copy of the archive shall be housed with the appropriate museum.
- 10.3 The archive shall be deposited with the appropriate museum within 1 months of the completion of the final publication report with a summary of the contents of the archive supplied to the Historic Environment Advisor

11. Monitoring

- 11.1 The Historic Environment consultant at Place Services will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project. This will include the fieldwork, post-excavation and publication stages.
- 11.2 Notification of the start of work shall be given to the Historic Environment consultant at Place Services one week in advance of its commencement.
- 11.3 All excavated areas must be inspected by the Place Services Historic Environment consultant prior to their development.
- 11.4 Any variations of the written scheme of investigation shall be agreed with the Historic Environment consultant at Place Services prior to them being carried out.

12. Contractors Written Scheme of Investigation

- 12.1 In accordance with Standards and Guidance produced by the IFA this design brief should not be considered sufficient to enable the total execution of the project. A WSI is required therefore in order to provide *the basis for a measurable standard* and for submission by the developer to the Local Planning Authority for approval.
- 12.2 Archaeological contractors shall forward a WSI to the Historic Environment Advisor of Essex County Council for validation prior to fieldwork commencing.
- 12.3 The involvement of the Historic Environment Advisor shall be acknowledged in any report or publication generated by this project.

References

Brown and Glazebrook	2000	Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2- Research Agenda and Strategy (East Anglian Archaeology)
Gurney	2003	Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (EAA Occas. Paper 18)
Medlycott, M.	2011	<i>Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England</i> East Anglian. Archaeol. Occ. Pap. 24
Orr, K	2007	An archaeological excavation of test-holes at St Barnabas Church, Alphamstone, Essex. March and May 2007

For further information regarding the content of this brief please contact the author at the address below. As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content and presentation of this archaeological brief.

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