

Steen's Bridge Methodist Chapel, Docklow,
Herefordshire:
archaeological monitoring, recording and building
survey

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2003



archenfield archaeology ltd

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Archenfield Archaeology Ltd is a multidisciplinary archaeological consultancy, offering a complete range of archaeological advice and services to the public and private sector. We specialise in giving archaeological advice to developers, housing associations and private individuals. We also undertake archaeological intervention, from monitoring to full-scale excavation; building survey; landscape and geophysical surveys and community-based historical and archaeological projects.

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2003

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Cover Photograph: Steen's Bridge Methodist Chapel



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Summary

Archenfield Archaeology was commissioned by Ms Denise Camps to carry out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at The Chapel, Steen's Bridge, Herefordshire during December 2001. No archaeological finds or features were observed during the monitoring of groundwork and excavation of service trenches at Steen's Bridge Chapel. The chapel itself is of architectural and historic interest, particularly the coloured brick decoration around the windows and wall buttresses, the decorated ridge tiles, and a large circular window above the entrance porch.

1.0 Introduction

NGR SO 53740 57540

Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record - Event No 32269

Hereford City Museum Accession No HFDMG2002-10

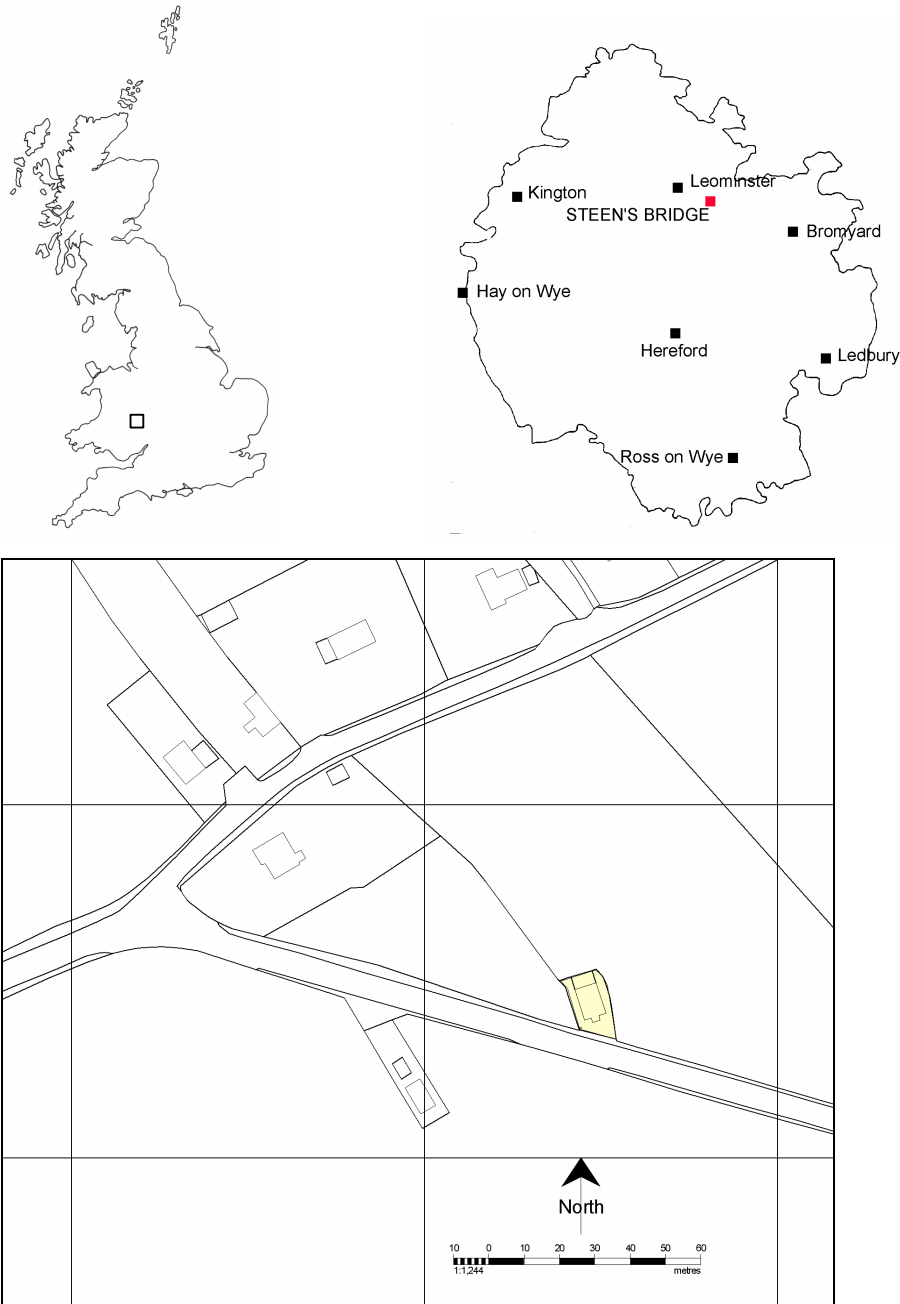


Figure 1: Location plan. OS data reproduced under licence, drawing ref hemc00004252

Ms Denise Camps (the client) commissioned a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at The Chapel, Steen's Bridge, Herefordshire, in accordance with a brief issued by the Herefordshire Council Archaeology Service. This was issued in response to planning application NC2001/0075F for permission to convert the Chapel.

2.0 Geological, historical and archaeological background

2.1 Geological background

The solid geology of the area consists of the Lower Old Red Sandstone (OS Geological Survey 1979).

2.2 Historical background

Steen's Bridge lies within the parish of Docklow. Docklow is not recorded in Domesday, but the neighbouring parish of Hampton Wafer is recorded as being held by Roger of Lacy, and as having 'In lordship 1 plough' (Thorn & Thorn 1983). It is possible that Docklow did not exist at this time, or was merely a tiny hamlet associated with Hampton Wafer. Later, Docklow became the larger settlement, and Hampton Wafer is described in The National Gazetteer of 1868 as 'an extra parochial place in the parish of Docklow'.

Steen's Bridge chapel is marked on the 1889 and 1964 Ordnance Survey maps. The conveyance of land for the building of Steens Bridge chapel is dated as 4th May 1881 and the chapel received its certificate of worship on the 13th September 1881 as a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. The land for the chapel was given by a Mr G Lloyd who was a local preacher and member of the Methodist Society.

In 1930 the chapel appears to have been closed for a while, possibly for renovations, and then reopened. The Leominster Free Church Magazine reported that at a fundraising concert the chapel was completely filled, and the future of the chapel was hopeful. In 1944, however, only four members are recorded, and the same number in 1960. The chapel was closed in October 1965, and in 1967 it was sold for £250 (Wood 2003).

2.3 Archaeological background

The Iron Age hill fort Uphampton Camp is recorded in Camden's Britannia as existing in Docklow, but there is little evidence of the fort on the ground. Two terraces have been identified on the north scarp of the hill, and scarps and field banks in fields immediately east and north of the site indicate agricultural activity. On the south side of the hill terraces have either been ploughed out, or possibly the fort was never completed.¹

Earthworks of a deserted medieval village have been identified in Hampton Wafer; a number of buildings were traced and tentatively dated to the early 12th – 14th centuries. The village is present in the Domesday book. A chapel is recorded here in the Episcopal registers between 1349 and 1536.² The chapel is mentioned in a dispute over its advowson between Simon de Wafre and the prior of Leominster in 1148-54.³ The church of St Bartholomew in Docklow also dates from the medieval period, although parts of it have been largely rebuilt.⁴

¹ Herefordshire SMR number 1238

² Herefordshire SMR number 6571

³ Herefordshire SMR number 12026

⁴ Herefordshire SMR number 6934

3.0 Project aims and objectives

The aims of the project were: -

- To monitor all groundwork undertaken by the contractor.
- To make a record of the extent and depth of all such groundwork.
- To make a record of any archaeological features or deposits exposed.
- To record the presence of archaeological material within the trenches and in the spoil removed during excavation, and to retrieve any potential dating evidence.
- To make a record of all finds and any environmental material recovered.
- To ensure that if any environmental evidence was preserved, that a sufficient sample be retained to allow for further analysis.
- To ensure that the location and of the area excavated was accurately recorded on a suitably scaled plan.
- To record negative evidence and to consider its implications.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Field methodology

The following methodology was employed: -

- Suitably qualified archaeologists monitored all activity that involved disturbance of the ground surface.
- Stratigraphic sequences observed were recorded on scaled drawings and the position of all work disturbing the ground was located on them.
- The presence of one sherd of pottery and was recorded with a description of its type and original location. The spoil was scanned for significant finds but in fact none were observed.
- All photographic records and drawing numbers were recorded on the relevant data capture documents in accordance with Archenfield Archaeology's standard site recording procedures.
- Each photographic exposure was recorded in the photographic log.
- Staff carrying out the monitoring of the groundwork followed the guidelines laid down in the Archenfield Archaeology Health and Safety Policy
- Archenfield Archaeology conforms to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual arrangements in Field Archaeology. All projects are, where applicable, carried out in accordance with IFA Standards and Guidance or Draft Standards and Guidance.

4.2 Processing methodology

- All retained artefacts and ecofacts were subjected to further analysis.
- All data were entered into a Microsoft Access relational database

5.0 Results

5.1 Brief survey of the building

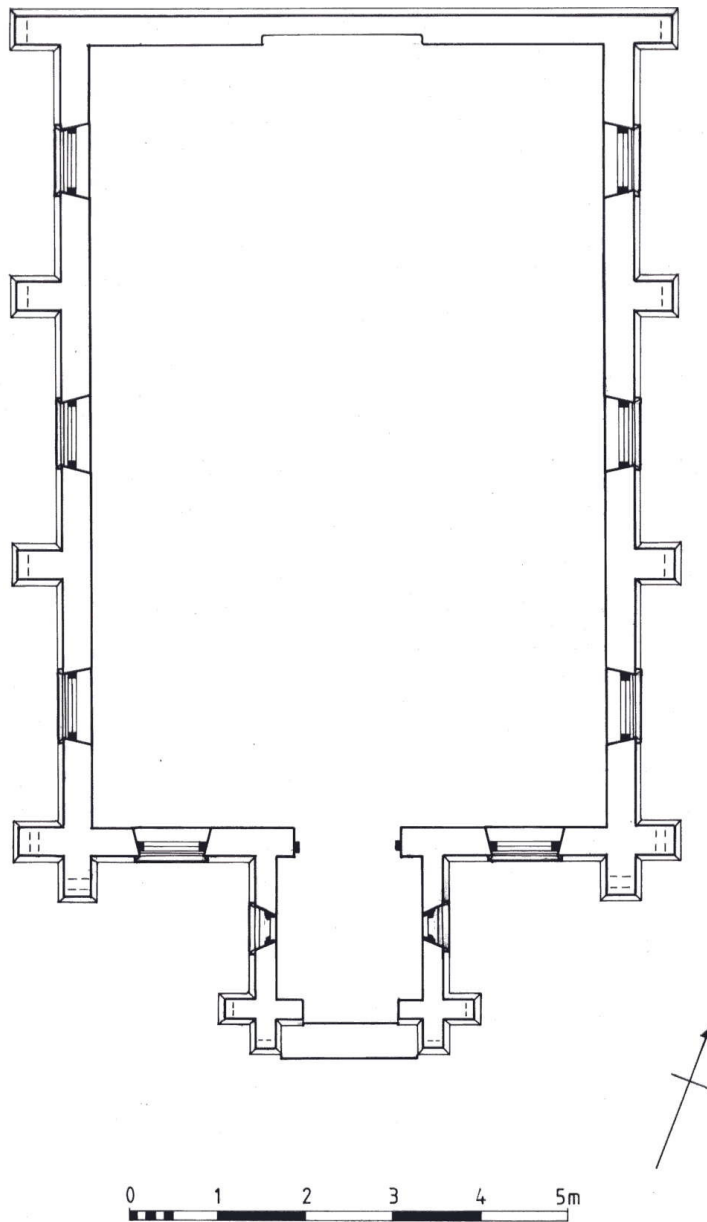


Figure 2: Ground plan of the chapel

The chapel is built from brick, with a slate roof and ornamental ridge tiles. Around the upper portions of the buildings, and on the four wall buttresses on each side, various coloured bricks have been used to create patterns (plate 1).

At the front of the chapel there is a roomy brick-built porch with narrow lancet windows on each side, also decorated with coloured bricks. Above this is a large circular window with some coloured glass (plate 2). Substantial barge boards under the gable end are of the same pattern as the porch. The chapel appears to be above average in the quality of construction; the circular window is an unusual feature for a local chapel. A photographic record of the building was made.



Plate 1: Coloured stones used to decorate the windows and wall buttresses



Plate 2: Large circular window above the entrance porch

5.2 Monitoring of groundworks

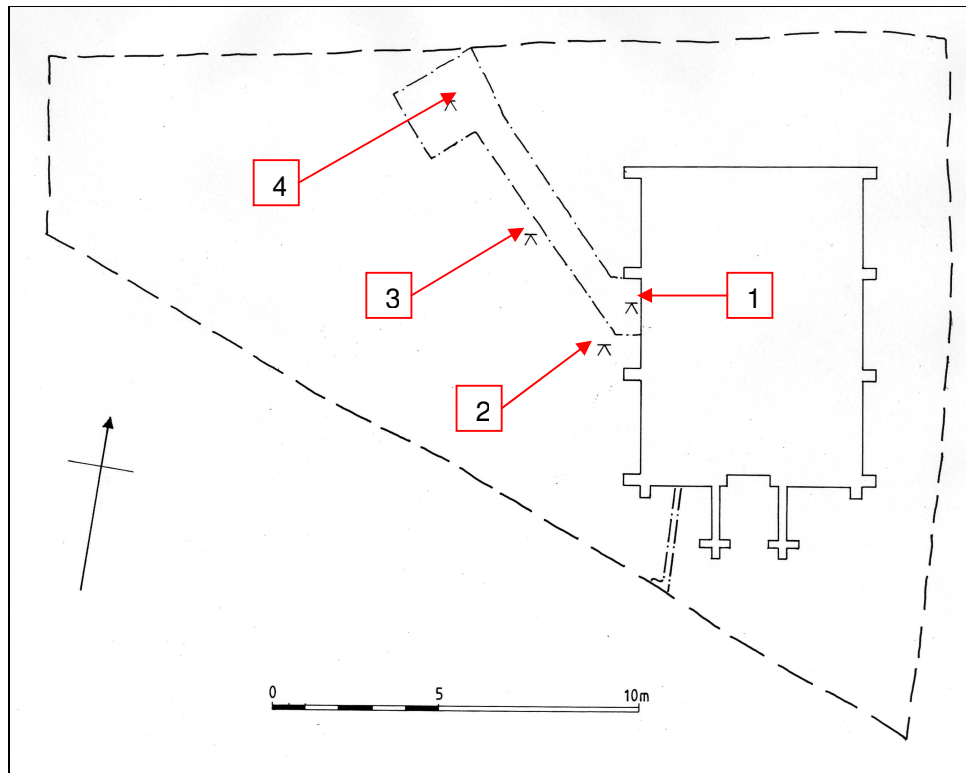


Figure 3: Site plan indicating area of fieldwork

Ground clearance was monitored, as was the installation of service runs and a bio disk. The hedge to the west of the chapel was removed by machine.

A service trench was excavated to a depth of 0.55 metres, running south-east to north-west from the western edge of the building (plate 3). 0.2-0.25 metres of topsoil lay over a neutral red-brown clay. No archaeological features were observed, and only one sherd of bone china was recovered.

A septic tank pit was dug to a total depth of 2.9 metres (plate 4). A red-orange clay with patches of decayed sandstone lay beneath 0.2-0.25 metres of topsoil, with a patch of finer pea-gravel visible in the northern corner. No archaeological finds or features were observed.

Levels were taken and are shown on figure 3 above: 1 = 132.42 OD, 2 = 132.46 OD, 3 = 133.05 OD, 4 = 133.19 OD.



Plate 3: Service trench



Plate 4: Septic tank pit

6.0 Conclusions

No archaeological finds or features were observed during the monitoring of groundwork and excavation of service trenches at Steen's Bridge Methodist Chapel. The chapel itself is of architectural and historic interest, particularly the coloured brick decoration, decorated ridge tiles, and the large circular window above the entrance porch.

7.0 Archive deposition

The primary project archive, consisting of any original paper records, will be stored with Hereford City Museum.

A copy of the digital archive, stored on CD and consisting of context and artefact data, together with the site plan and selected photographs, will accompany the primary archive.

8.0 Publication and dissemination proposals

Paper copies of this report will be lodged with the Archaeological Adviser to Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record and Hereford City Library. A short note on the project will be prepared for publication in Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club.

CDs of this report, together with the supporting archival material will be available from Archenfield Archaeology.

The complete photographic record, including the negatives, will be retained by Archenfield Archaeology.

General bibliography

British Geological Survey 1979

Geological survey 10 mile map, south sheet, 3rd edition (solid) 1979 1:625000

Thorn, F & Thorn, C, 1983 (*eds.*)

Domesday Book, Herefordshire. Phillimore

Wood, P 2003

Docklow and Hampton Wafer - Steens Bridge Methodist Chapel.

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