

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
SHIRLEY BAPTIST CHURCH,
STRATFORD ROAD, SHIRLEY,
SOLIHULL



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Worcestershire Archaeology
Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service
The Hive
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Watching brief at Shirley Baptist Church, Stratford Road, Shirley, Solihull

Authors Tim Cornah and Tom Rogers

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Capita Symonds at Shirley Baptist Church, Stratford Road, Shirley, Solihull (NGR ref (NGR SP 117 796).

Planning permission has been granted by the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council for the extension of the time limit on approved planning application 2006/2748 for the demolition and rebuilding of community facilities to the rear of church, including church offices, coffee shop, church shop, family support centre, a variety of community rooms and the installation of a wind turbine. This was considered by the Curator to have the potential to affect an archaeological site (HER ref MSI 5845) and a programme of archaeological works was specified as a condition of planning consent. The watching brief was undertaken on removal of a concrete slab and subsequent ground reduction and foundation excavations. No features or finds of archaeological significance were recorded and it is concluded that either the site was heavily truncated during the construction of the church or community centre or that it lay outside the built up area of Shirley until the 19th Century.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Shirley Baptist Church, Stratford Road, Shirley. It was commissioned by Ms J Wassell of Capita Symonds.

Planning permission has been granted by the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council for the extension of the time limit on approved planning application 2006/2748 for the demolition and rebuilding of community facilities to the rear of church, including church offices, coffee shop, church shop, family support centre, a variety of community rooms and the installation of a wind turbine. This was considered by Anna Stocks, Warwickshire County Museum Planning Archaeologist (who advises Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council) to have the potential to affect remains associated with the medieval settlement of Shirley (Solihull HER ref MSI 5845) and a programme of archaeological works was specified as a condition of planning consent. A brief was prepared, dated 29th November 2012 (WCC 2012) for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2012).

The project conforms to the brief and *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008).

2 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to obtain an adequate record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed by work associated with the development (WCC 2012).

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Tim Cornah BA who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006 and has been practicing archaeology since 2003. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers BA MSc. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt.

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

Fieldwork was undertaken between 6th and 15th January 2013. Observation of all ground works was undertaken. All ground reduction was undertaken using a wide, toothless ditching bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected so as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012a).

3.4 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

3.5 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

Having undertaken the project the following comments may be made with regard to the methods adopted. Though initial demolition phase did not allow for a much visibility as would be ideal, subsequent ground reduction methods allowed that a reasonably high level of confidence can be attached to the conclusions of this project.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site overlies firm sandy clays which in turn overlie Mercian Mudstone. It is within the area marked on Solihull Historic Environment Record as the medieval settlement of Shirley (MSI5845) for which it is recorded that the name Shirley means 'bright' or 'border' clearing in Forest of Arden which in 1086 was a small part of manor of Ulverley. It is within the Solihull Landscape Characterisation zone HSI1731 which is characterised as post 1955 terraced housing within the area of medieval settlement.

In an archaeological evaluation undertaken immediately to the west of the site evidence for medieval agriculture was recorded in the form of two furrows (Mann 2012). It was concluded that the site lay outside the medieval settlement of Shirley and remained under cultivation until the construction of residential and commercial properties in the mid 20th century.

A building is depicted on the site on the Shirley tithe map of 1840 (WCC 2012).

4.2 Current land-use

The site lies to the rear of Shirley Baptist Church and was in use until recently as the site of the community centre to the rear of the church with the planned new building being a replacement of this.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Where exposed, the natural substrate comprised a yellow orange clay with rounded gravel inclusions (102).

5.1.2 Phase 2: Modern deposits

Topsoil (101), a friable grey brown clay silt was overlain by a layer of tarmac (100) and cut by concrete and brick footings of the former community centre (103).

6 Synthesis

No significant archaeological features or deposits were recognised during the watching brief. All remains and features recorded were part of the now demolished modern community centre. It was clear that the foundations of the modern community centre were truncating natural substrate so potentially also truncating archaeological features and deposits. Some areas of undisturbed natural substrate and topsoil were observed but no archaeological features were recorded within these areas.

This implies either that the construction of the church and/or community centre truncated the archaeological features on the site (which may have included the remains of a building depicted on the 1840 tithe map) or that the site lay outside the medieval and post medieval settlement of Shirley until the 19th Century.

The latter conclusion concurs with the findings of the evaluation undertaken immediately to the west of the site which demonstrated that the site was agricultural until relatively recent development.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project; Julia Wassell of Capita Symonds and Anna Stocks Warwickshire County Museum Planning Archaeologist.

9 Bibliography

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DCLG/DCMS/EH 2010 *PPS5 Planning for the historic environment: historic environment planning practice guide*, Department for Communities and Local Government/Department for Culture, Media and Sport/English Heritage

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

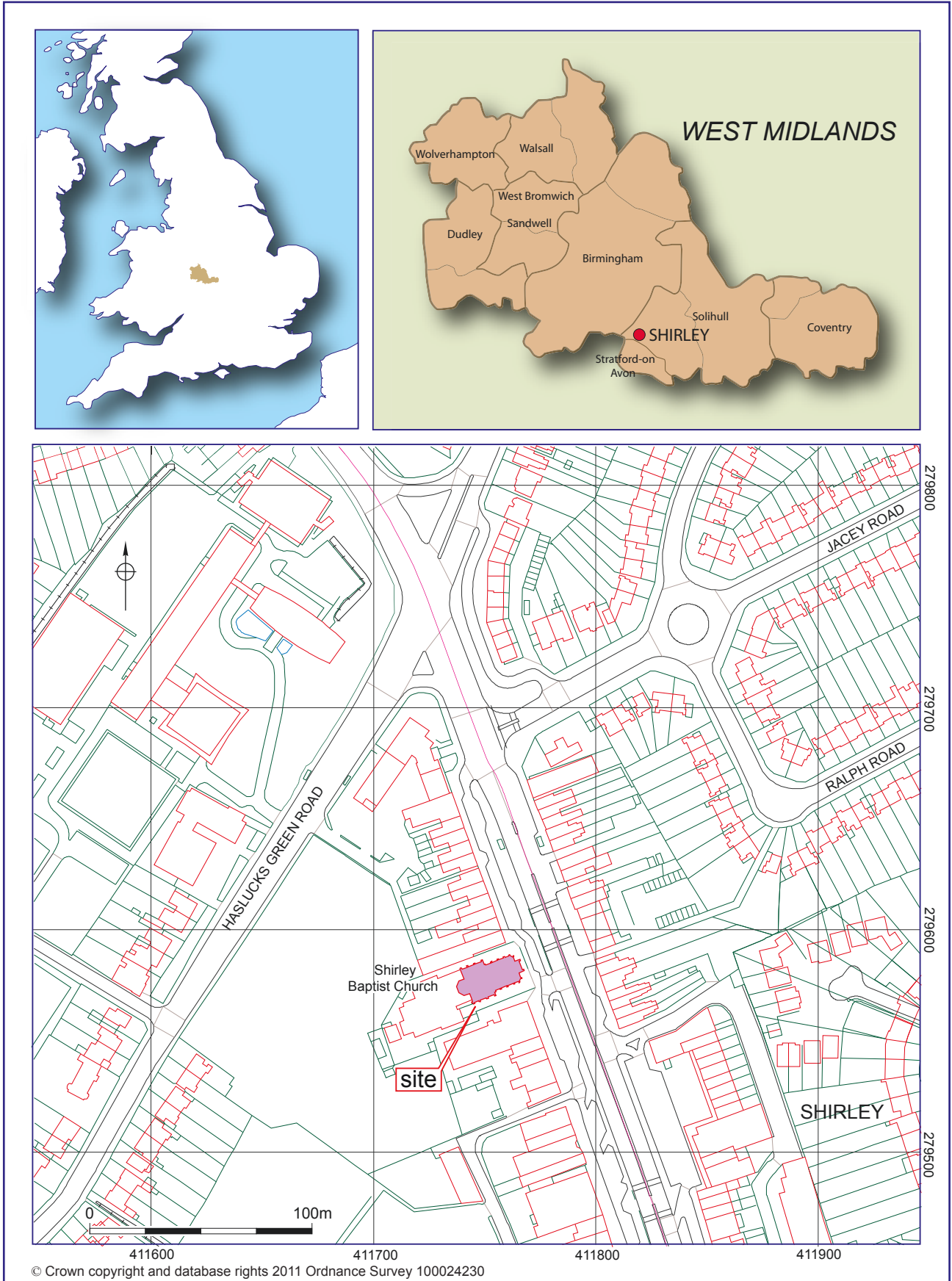
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WA 2012 *Proposal for an archaeological watching brief at Shirley Baptist Church, Stratford Road, Shirley, Solihull*, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 4th of December 2012, **P4018**

Warwickshire County Council 2012 *Brief for an archaeological watching brief at Shirley Baptist Church, Stratford Road, Shirley, Solihull*, Archaeological Information and Advice, Warwickshire County Council, unpublished document dated November 2012

Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location (based upon Nolan Associates Ground Plan: Dwg No. 002)

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1 The site from the west



Plate 2 Excavation of footings

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth (OD or below ground level) |
|---------|----------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 100 | Tarmac | Medium orange/brown fine soft sandy silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains occasional medium flecks of charcoal, rare tile and rare clay pipe. Cut by one modern water pipe trench. | 0.15m |
| 101 | Topsoil | Friable grey brown clay silt. | 0.15m |
| 102 | Natural | Yellow orange clay with rounded gravels | 0.55m |
| 103 | Footings | Concrete and brick slabs and footings truncating contexts 101 and 102 | Up to 1.50m |

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 27 Digital photographs
- 1 Scale drawing
- 1 Trench record sheet AS41
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Warwickshire Museum Services
The Butts
Warwick
CV34 4SS
Tel. (01926) 412500

