

Watching brief at the Church of St Mary And All Saints Kidderminster

Worcestershire Archaeology
for the Church of England

July 2020



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CHURCH OF ST MARY AND ALL SAINTS KIDDERMINSTER WORCESTERSHIRE

Watching brief report



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The Hive
Sawmill Walk
The Butts
Worcester
WR1 3PD

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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Church of St Marys and All Saints, Kidderminster,
Worcestershire

Site code: WSM01303

Central NGR: NGR SO 83005 76932

Commissioning client:  Church of England

WA project number: P5884

WA report number: 2835

HER reference: WSM73326

Oasis reference: fieldsec1-399699

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Watching brief at the Church of St Marys and All Saints, Kidderminster, Worcestershire

By Tim Cornah

Illustrations by Tim Cornah

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at the Church of St Marys and All Saints, Kidderminster, Worcestershire (NGR SO 83005 76932). It was commissioned by the Church authorities during works on drainage run improvements. The work was undertaken with the understanding of the diocesan archaeologist that archaeological works and recording would be undertaken if intact human remains were encountered.

The location of the single drainage trench was to the south of St Marys Church, on the eastern side of the entrance and church tower. The trench extended for a length of 3.90m and modern deposits along with truncation by a drain were encountered. Below this was an undated deposit into which a partially intact single inhumation had been interred. This was also undated. The inhumation burial was recorded without removal and covered back over. No further intact remains were present during the works.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in June 2020 at the Church of St Mary and All Saints, Kidderminster, Worcestershire (NGR SO 83005 76932). This comprised of the observation and recording of a single small drainage trench.

The project was commissioned by the parish authorities works on drainage run improvements. The work was undertaken with the understanding of the diocesan archaeologist that archaeological works and recording would be undertaken if intact human remains were encountered.

No brief was provided but the project conformed to the generality of briefs. A WSI was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (2020) and approved by Victoria Bryant, the Diocesan Archaeologist. The watching brief also conformed to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in the *Standard and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010)

1.2 Site location, topography and geology and historical background

The trench was located on the southern side of the church parallel to its wall on roughly flat ground. The flat ground was as the top of a slope which reduced in height towards the south. The underlying bedrock geology is recorded as Chester Formation - Sandstone and conglomerate interbedded, with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS 2020).

During the life of the church, the use of the area in which the trench was located was presumably largely that of a burial ground. There has been suggestions of a minster church in Kidderminster since a charter dated 736AD which granted land for the building of minster, though this is conjectural. A building was certainly standing on the site in the 13th century with 14th century elements remaining within the structure though a large part of its standing elements date to the earlier 16th century. Its extant character is dominated by changes of the 19th century, most notable in this case was the addition of a southern chancel in around 1850. It is likely that there was a significant degree of ground levelling within the area of the recorded trench at this date.

Project aims

The aims of the watching brief are to observe, and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible within the constraints of the Client's groundworks.

The specific aims of the watching brief will as follows:-

- to record the nature and location and if possible, date of the burial, in particular to determine whether the skeleton is articulated.
- to determine the relationship of the inhumation to the structure of either the medieval church or the Victorian extensions.
- To determine whether the location of the human remains sheds light on movement of material during the Victorian expansion of the church or other post depositional processes in this vicinity of the churchyard.

2 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020). Fieldwork was undertaken on 25 June 2020.

A single trench measuring 3.90m in length and up to 0.70m in width was recorded. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 2.

Excavation was undertaken by hand and clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and features location were surveyed on drawn plans. The inhumation was planned using photogrammetry. The inhumation was at a depth at which pipework could be laid above it, so was covered and left in place.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through structural evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Worcestershire County Museum.

3 Archaeological results

3.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trench are shown in Figure 2 and Plate 1.

3.2 Trench descriptions

3.2.1 Phase 1: Undated

A mid orangey brown sandy silt deposit 104 was present in the majority of the trench, extending to a depth of up to 0.22m without its base having been reached. This deposit had been removed on arrival at the site and therefore no dateable material was recovered from it.

Presumably truncated into 104, though with no clear identifiable cut, was a single likely adult inhumation burial 103 located at a depth of 0.40m below the ground surface and extending for a length of 0.65m. This was located parallel to the church wall and broadly east-west aligned. It was laid supine with head at the west end, though this had been damaged and was at least half under the limit of the trench. The majority of the vertebrae were present along with ribs, clavicle and scapula of its right side and one of its right lower arm bones. This latter along with the spine had been truncated by probable drain 101.

No dateable material was recovered from the vicinity of the burial, similarly there was no indication that the burial was placed within a coffin.

3.2.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval to modern

A dark grey black sandy silt deposit 102 extended for the entire length of the trench for up to a depth of 0.26m. Similarly, this had been removed on arrival so no dateable material was recovered. This overlaid deposit 105 as well as burial 103. Its relationship to probable drain 101 was not clear, though it is likely that the drain was modern, given the presence of a modern drain head to its immediate east.

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
100	Fill of 101	>0.48m	0.00	A dark grey black sandy silt deposit, very similar to 102

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
101	Cut of modern drain	>0.48m	0.00	Cut feature running towards the south east from a modern drain head. Truncates burial 103.
102	Made ground	0.26	0	A dark grey black sandy silt deposit. Seals 103 and 104.
103	Inhumation burial	Unexcavated	0.40	East to west aligned supine adult inhumation, with head at the west end. Truncated below lower spine level by 101
104	Made ground/burial soil	0.47	0.26	Mid orangey brown sandy silt with occasional small rounded stones

4 Artefactual evidence

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts were identified which were considered to be suitable for analysis.

5 Environmental evidence

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

6 Discussion and conclusion

The recorded trench on the southern side of the Church of St Marys and All Saints within the historic burial ground contained deposits, a drainage feature and a single inhumation burial.

Dating the adult inhumation burial and the deposit into which it was cut remained problematic given its lack of associated artefactual evidence. Some consideration of the overlying deposits and 19th century changes to the church, most notably the addition of the adjacent south chancel in the mid-19th century, may be instructive. It is likely that a significant degree of levelling of the natural slope of the site was required before the addition of the south chancel, it is probable that this was represented in the trench by deposit 102. This would also potentially explain why the inhumation burial was located close to the modern ground surface at a depth of 0.40m. It is therefore likely that the single burial predates the additions to the church structure of the mid-19th, though the evidence is circumstantial.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in the trench to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features.

7 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tim Cornah, ACIfA and managed by Tom Rogers, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Tim Cornah.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Mark Carter at the Church of England for commissioning the project and Sue MacAskill for her help during field work. The project was monitored by Victoria Bryant the Diocesan Archaeologist and Worcestershire Archaeology would also like to thank her for her advice.

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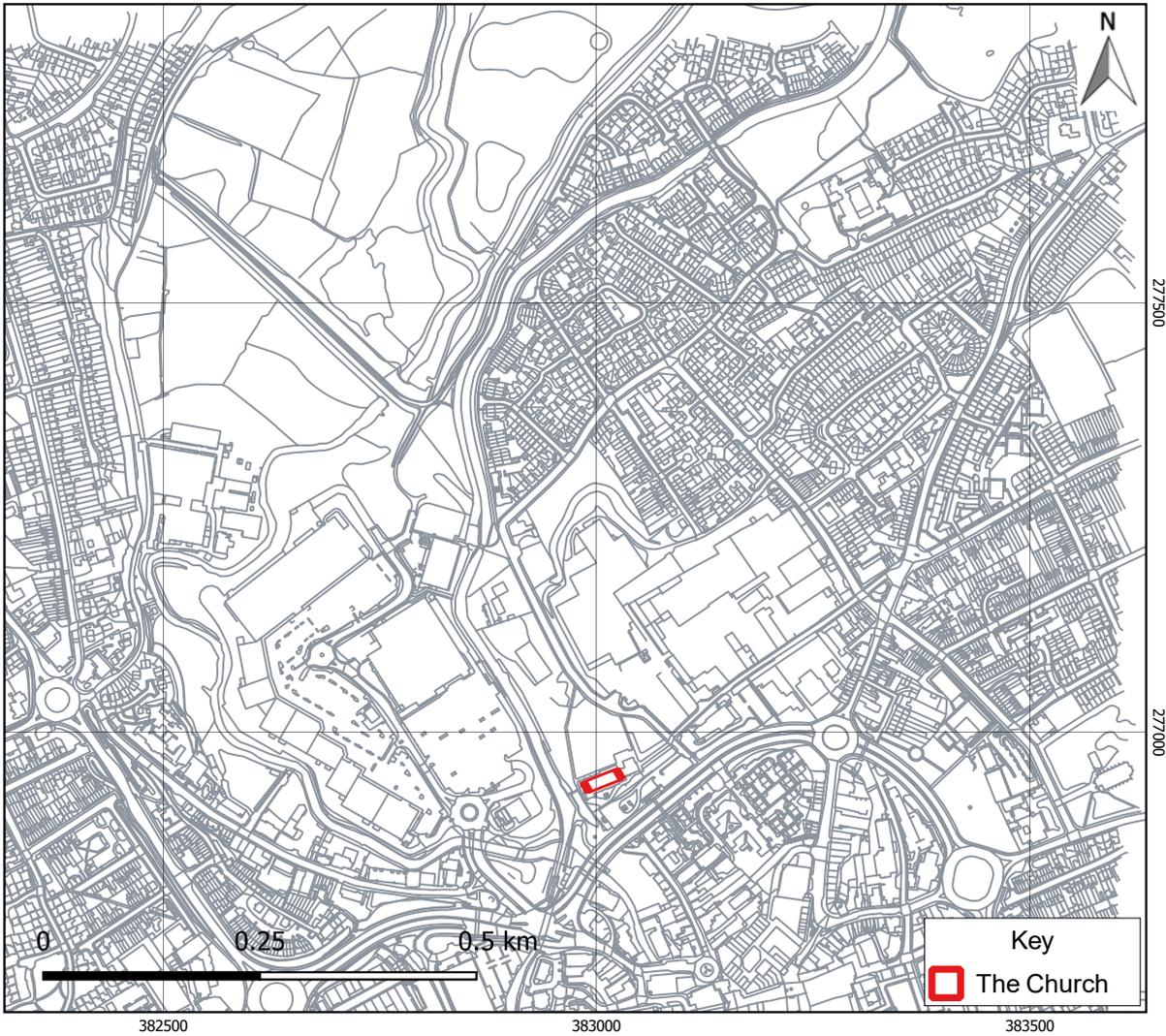
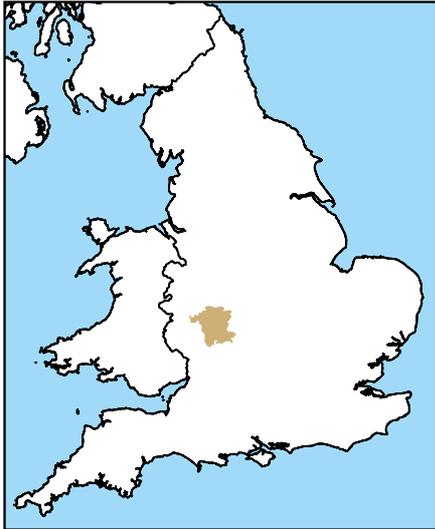
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Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench and inhumation location and plan

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: The pipe trench, looking west, scale 1m



Plate 1: Inhumation 103 looking downwards, scale 0.3m

Appendix 1: Summary of project archive (WSM73326)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Paper	Drawing
Digital	Images raster/digital photography, Text

**OASIS terminology*

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Worcestershire County Museum.