All Saints’ Church, Moor Road, Breadsall, Derbyshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Helen Daniel

Site Code: CLB19/68
(SK 3710 3979)
All Saints’ Church, Moor Road, Breadsall, Derbyshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for Parochial Church Council of Breadsall

by Helen Daniel

TVAS (North Midlands)

Site Code CLB19/68

February 2021
Summary

Site name: All Saints’ Church, Moor Road, Breadsall, Derbyshire

Grid reference: SK 3710 3979

Site activity: Test Pit and Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 26th June 2019 and 13th January 2021

Project coordinator: Helen Daniel

Site supervisor: Helen Daniel

Site code: CLB19/68

Area of site: c.3 sq m

Summary of results: The watching brief was carried out as intended, with observation of the hand-excavation of a small drainage trench outside the south porch. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were encountered during the course of the works.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at TVAS North Midlands, Stoke-on-Trent and will be deposited at Buxton Museum and Art Gallery in due course.
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at All Saints’ Church, Moor Road, Breadsall, Derbyshire (SK 3710 3979) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Nichola Robinson, of Smith and Roper, Surveyors and Architects, 65-67 Church Street, Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire on behalf of the Parochial Church Council of Breadsall.

A faculty has been granted by the Diocese of Derby for permission to carry out alterations to the floor of the Church’s south porch and associated drainage works. Given the location of the works at the Grade I Listed (1328833) All Saints’ Church and therefore the potential for the works to disturb or destroy any below ground archaeological remains, on advice from the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), the Faculty is subject to a condition requiring archaeological monitoring during the groundworks. An archaeological watching brief was requested to facilitate this.

These works have been carried out in accordance with a specification provided by TVAS North Midlands (Daniel 2019) and approved by the DAC. The investigations were carried out by Helen Daniel on 26th June 2019 and 13th January 2021 and the site code is CLB19/68. The archive is presently held at TVAS North Midlands, Stoke-on-Trent and will be deposited at Buxton Museum and Art Gallery in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the small rural village and civil parish of Breadsall (Fig. 1), situated approximately 4km north-east of the city of Derby and just over a kilometre to the east of the River Derwent. Situated on a gentle incline which slopes gradually southwards, the church overlooks the village and the Derwent Valley, at an elevation of 66m above Ordnance Datum. The grounds of the church occupy a nearly triangular area south of Moor Road and east of Church Lane. The underlying bedrock geology is recorded as Morridge Formation – Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone (BGS 2021). The natural geology was not reached during the groundworks.
Archaeological background

The village of Breadsall has late Saxon origins and appears as a manor held by Henry de Ferrers and recorded as ‘Braegsheale’ in Domesday Book, where there is also a reference to a church (Williams and Martin 2002). Although there are no records of a church in the area before 1087, ‘Braegsheale’, meaning ‘a nook of land of a man called Brægd’ (Mills 2011, 74), is mentioned in an endowment charter of the Abbey of Burton, dated 1002. The present church is of Norman origin, with the oldest section of the church being the South porch which dates from around 1150. It is possible that there was an earlier Saxon church in the vicinity, as there have been reports in the past that some of the stones in the present tower may show evidence of pre-Norman dressing and that part of a Saxon cross was once visible within the chancel wall.

A substantial phase of rebuilding took place in the 13th century when the present chancel and tower were constructed in the Early English style, and a north aisle added. Further changes were made around 1360 when new windows were installed on the south side of the chancel along with a nave in the Decorated Style. A spire was added and the eastern section of the aisle extended northwards. In the mid-15th century the present east window was installed and the north aisle completed in the Perpendicular style (Pevsner 1978). Repairs and alterations took place during the 19th century, mostly to roof and woodwork, but these disappeared in a fire on the night of June 4th 1914 when many fine and ancient books were destroyed. It was alleged at the time that the fire was the work of militant suffragettes. Restoration was completed by 1916 at an estimated cost of £11,000.

Approximately 2km north of the present village, is the location of a priory which was mentioned as a religious house during the time of Edward the Confessor and also in Domesday Book but which was certainly well established by 1266. The present remains consist of the ruins of the 13th-century priory of Austin Canons, plus an almost intact Elizabethan mansion and a 19th-century house.

Recent archaeological discoveries in the vicinity include prehistoric features found c.800m south-west of the site at Breadsall Hilltop, which comprised Late Neolithic features, including Grooved Ware pottery as well as Early Iron Age boundary ditches along with settlement evidence from an 18m roundhouse (ULAS 2018).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavated and record any archaeological deposits affected by the alterations to the floor of the south porch of the church and associated drainage works. Prior to any substantial works a test pit was required to ascertain to what depth the dressed stone of the Norman arch continued beyond floor level. The specific aims of the watching brief were:
to examine the nature of the foundations of the church and look for any earlier structures.

to determine the extent to which human remains survive within any of the areas.

to observe the presence of any graves and vaults.

An initial visit was to be made to observe the excavation of a test pit inside the south porch. The drainage trenches were to be observed during excavation for archaeological deposits. Any archaeological deposits which were threatened by the groundworks were to be excavated and recorded. Sufficient time was to be allowed to carry this out within the groundworkers schedules without causing undue delay. Machine excavation was to be halted if any articulated human remains were encountered. These remains were to be recorded and if necessary, after consultation with the incumbent, lifted and handed over to the church for reburial. Spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

Test Pit

A test pit was excavated in the porch’s north-west internal corner (Fig. 3) in order to ascertain to what depth the dressed stone of the Norman arch continued beyond floor level. This would in turn determine if the ramped section of the floor should continue through the doorway beyond the threshold and into the church, making the proposed finished floor level higher at the base of the arch or if the floor could be set as detailed, with the ramp terminating at the threshold of the door.

Six quarry tiles (150mm x 150mm x 40mm) were lifted, together with the cut tiles abutting the base of the western respond. The area was then excavated down to 223mm below the height of the upper step, this being approximately a depth of 46mm below the finished floor level of the nave. At this level a flat stone was encountered and excavation ceased, without further excavation it was not possible to determine whether the stone spanned across the full width of the doorway. No other archaeological finds were noted within the test pit and it was decided by the DAC that further monitoring in this area would not be required.

Watching Brief

In front of the south porch doorway, an L-shaped trench aligned roughly west and then north around the exterior of the south porch wall was hand-excavated under constant archaeological supervision (Fig. 3, Pls 1-2). The trench was positioned directly outside the south wall, abutting the front doors of the porch.
In this area the trench was hand-excavated to a depth of 0.3m where it abuts the wall and to a depth of 0.15m next to the path. It was at maximum 0.6m wide and continued in a westerly direction at this width for a length of 1.4m. At this point the trench narrowed, continuing for another 2.4m at a maximum width of 0.3m, but with the depth increasing gradually down to an average of 0.5m as it continued its course along the edge of the southern wall. Here the trench turned at a right angle, proceeding in a northerly direction around the western wall, where it was positioned to ensure a 0.4m buffer was retained from the western wall of the porch.

The total length of trench excavated was 6.6m, with widths of 0.3m and 0.6m and depths ranging between 0.3m in the east to 0.5m to the west. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.05 of asphalt over 0.25m of soft dark brown loamy topsoil over 0.10-20m of light orange-yellow clayey-sand (Fig. 4). The groundworks encountered no archaeological deposits or finds and the natural substrate was not reached.

Conclusion

The watching brief was carried out as was intended in the project specification. No archaeological finds were noted within the test pit and it was decided by the DAC that further monitoring in this area would not be required. The external monitoring of the drainage works encountered no features or deposits of archaeological interest and no finds were observed, either in the trench areas or within the spoil removed during the course of the groundworks.

References

Daniel, H, 2019, ‘Project specification for an archaeological watching brief: All Saints’ Church, Moor Lane, Breadsall, Derbyshire’, TVAS (North Midlands)
Mills, A D, 2011, Dictionary of English Place-Names, Oxford
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Figure 1. Location of site within Breadsall and Derbyshire.
Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Moor Road.
Figure 3. Location of site and area monitored during watching brief

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Figure 3. Location of site and area monitored during watching brief
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Figure 4. Representative section
Plate 1. Drainage trench, looking North, Scales: 1m, 0.5m and 0.3m.

Plate 2. Drainage trench, looking North East, Scales: 1m, 0.5m and 0.3m.
### TIME CHART

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| Bronze Age: Late | 1300 BC |
| Bronze Age: Middle | 1700 BC |
| Bronze Age: Early | 2100 BC |

| Neolithic: Late | 3300 BC |
| Neolithic: Early | 4300 BC |

| Mesolithic: Late | 6000 BC |
| Mesolithic: Early | 10000 BC |

| Palaeolithic: Upper | 30000 BC |
| Palaeolithic: Middle | 70000 BC |
| Palaeolithic: Lower | 2,000,000 BC |
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