

**ST MARY'S CHURCH, TURWESTON,  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**NGR SP 600378**

**Oxford Archaeological Unit**

**16 September 1994**

## **SUMMARY**

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a watching brief on drainage works at St Mary's Church, Turweston, SP 600378, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council. The church was to be surrounded by new french drains and soakaways to alleviate damp. The OAU monitored the hand excavation of a drainage trench which encircled the church. Wall foundations were uncovered to the W, E and S of the church.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The sources consulted for the background were Pevsner and the Victoria County History of Buckinghamshire. The N aisle and nave of the church are probably Norman in origin. The S aisle dates to the 13th/14th century. The entire church was remodelled in the mid 19th century by Street and much of the visible fabric of the church dates from this work. It is noted in the VCH that the floor level of the church appears to have been reduced by about 18 inches.

## **WATCHING BRIEF STRATEGY**

The strategy was based on an initial inspection of the deturfed and partly excavated drains. One site visit was made to record the archaeological details noted at that time and subsequent informal visits were made to verify that no further archaeological features were present.

The archaeological features encountered were cleaned by hand to determine their nature and depth and to recover dating evidence. The features were planned and their sections drawn at scales of 1:20 where they were excavated.

## **RESULTS**

### **Soils**

The general soil type was a slightly grey brown silt loam. The underlying subsoil was limestone brash.

### **Archaeology**

Four footings and one wall were recorded. It is likely that the footings are earlier than the current walls. The wall was not on the same alignment as the present S aisle.

The 0.6 m wide wall (2 and 5) was constructed of unfinished rough coursed masonry held together by a matrix of yellowish brown mortar. It was seen in two places, to the E of the porch and to the S of the E end of the S aisle (Fig.). There were no floor surfaces associated with this wall.

The footing (7) seen at the NE corner of the chancel was built of unfinished rough coursed masonry, only one course thick. It was on the same alignment as the present walls.

The footing (8 and 9) at the W end of the N aisle was again an unfinished rough coursed structure built of quartz or quartzite. It was not on the same alignment as the present wall. The lower three courses of masonry of the N wall of the N aisle were large unfinished blocks in contrast to the uniform sized and coursed stonework of the upper parts of the wall.

The footings around the base of the Tower were part finished uniform sized blocks.

The W wall of the S aisle lay over a footing (13) of roughly coursed unfinished limestone with a large quartz or quartzite block at the SW corner of the present aisle. There were no traces on the W side of the porch of the wall seen to the E.

Within the church the foundation of the pillar (19) at the W end of the N arcade was examined. The foundation was a large slightly worked quartz or quartzite stone. The level of the moulding on the base of the pillar was 0.45 m above the present floor.

### **Finds**

One large piece of stone was recovered from the E end of the chancel. It appeared to be a window corner of indeterminate date.

## **COMMENTS ON THE RESULTS**

### **Overall Interpretation**

The recorded deposits confirm the conclusions of Pevsner and the VCH that the church has been extensively remodelled by Street. The present floor is at the same level as the wall footings and the church lies in a hollow. Therefore, it would seem that the floor level of the church was lowered and the churchyard landscaped by Street. The rough nature of the lower parts of the pillars within the church support this argument. This reduction of the interior level may have added to the damp problems.

The S aisle has been totally rebuilt by Street on a slightly smaller plan. The wall (2 and 5) to the S of the church suggest that the medieval aisle was wider. The fabric of the wall, seen while plaster was being replaced, was partly brick to a low level, also suggesting a 19th-century date for this construction.

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### **Bibliography**

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