

Holy Cross and St Mary's Church, Quainton, Buckinghamshire QUHXSM14
Archaeological Watching Brief : Record of Site Attendance

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On the 22nd September 2014 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by ADP Architecture to carry out an archaeological watching brief on the ground works carried out at Holy Cross and St Mary's Church, Quainton, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP7499920155). The ground works, which were carried out in order to resolve a damp problem inside the church, involved the hand excavation of three investigative trenches (300mm wide) prior to the commencement of ground level reduction in areas on the north and south sides of the west end of the church. All works were carried out in accordance with a brief set by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser (DAA) and a method statement produced by ADP Architecture (ADP 2014). This document summarises the findings as requested by the DAA; a formal report was not required.

No human remains (articulated or disarticulated) were revealed within the investigative trenches. The foundations of the church walls were revealed and details are given below, along with a summary of other deposits encountered.

Observed in all three trenches:

Topsoil (1) - 50-100mm thick
General graveyard soil (2) – Grey-brown, clay-silt, fairly frequent limestone inclusions, up to 450mm thick.

Trench 1 (north side of the tower):

- Tower foundation (3) revealed up to 500mm below ground level (max. depth of trench excavation as foundations stepped outwards at this level).
- Total of three courses of hewn ?limestone blocks.
- Upper course blocks up to 140mm thick, second course block 280mm thick, upper surface of third course block revealed only, stepped outwards 340mm from wall.
- Soft, sandy-yellow lime mortar visible in places.
- Vertical sided construction cut (4) for tower foundation
- Light yellowish-grey, stony, clay-silt backfill (5) observed in trench section.

Trench 2 (south side of tower):

- Tower foundation (6) revealed up to 500mm below ground level (max. depth of trench excavation as foundations stepped outwards at this level).
- Total of three courses of hewn ?limestone blocks.
- Upper course block 170mm thick, second course block 180mm thick and stepped out 240mm from wall, third course block revealed up to 100mm thick and stepped out 70mm from the second course.
- Soft, sandy-yellow lime mortar visible in places.
- ?Vertical sided construction cut (7) for tower foundation
- Grey-brown, clay silt backfill (8) observed in trench section – only slightly more stony than general

graveyard soil (2).

It should be noted that a modern, clear plastic sweet jar was recovered from Trench 2. It had been buried approximately 200mm below the ground surface, wrapped in bubble-wrap and a black plastic bag. The jar was not opened at the time of the archaeological investigation but a second World War National Registration identity card could be seen within it. It was assumed that this was a personal memorial of some kind. A photographic record of the unopened jar was made. The jar was retained by the church for reburial.

Trench 3 (south side nave, west end):

- South wall of nave foundation (9) revealed up to 440 mm below ground level.
- Total of four courses of roughly hewn ?limestone blocks.
- Upper three courses comprising blocks 120-140mm thick. Up to 30mm of fourth course visible within impact level – stepped out 90mm from wall.
- No mortar bonding observed.
- Construction cut (10) – arbitrary, not observed.
- Backfill of construction cut (11) – arbitrary, not observed.

Full details of all contexts and a photographic record can be found in the archive. It is likely that the archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum, but this is to be confirmed.

Given that no archaeological features, aside from the wall foundations, or burials were revealed within the investigative trenches, it was advised that the main ground reduction could continue without the presence of an archaeologist. However, it was advised that, should any articulated burials be revealed during this work, Oxford Archaeology and the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor should be informed immediately.

References

ADP, 2014 *Church of Holy Cross and St Mary Quainton: Reduction of ground level around tower walls to reduce damp in walls: Specification/scope of work/cost estimate*, ADP Architecture, Oxford