

St Mary's Church, Berrow Archaeological Observations On behalf of the PCC



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RAB/01/19
HER 34763

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Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the contractors, Ellis & Co. for their assistance during the course of the watching brief.

1.0 Abstract

The removal and lowering of the existing pew platforms within the nave and aisles of St Mary's Church, Berrow required archaeological intervention in the form of a watching brief during the course of the works. Three graves including one double were located beneath the existing floor and preserved in-situ. No further archaeology was noted.

2.0 Introduction

Upon the recommendations of the Diocesan Archaeologist and comprising a requirement of the faculty of works, an archaeological watching brief was conducted at St Mary's Church, Berrow during works associated with the removal of the existing floor within the nave and aisles.

The watching brief was commissioned by Stone Ecclesiastical, Architects for the PCC and was conducted by R. A. Broomhead acting as Archaeological Consultant. Nine site visits were made between the 22nd March and the 16th April 2019

3.0 The Site

St Mary's Church lies at ST 29385246 on the edge of the present village of Berrow located amongst the sand dunes which seal an earlier settlement. Constructed primarily of local limestone, the body of the church is largely 13th century but contains elements of an earlier 12th century structure (HER PRN 10453). There is no record of any recent archaeological work being undertaken within the present building. Current works involve the lowering of a raised parquet floor lying in on a thick concrete slab in order to accommodate disabled access.

4.0 Aims and Methodology

The primary aim of the watching brief was to preserve either in situ or by record any archaeological features which may be observed or disturbed by the development. To add to existing knowledge of the Church and its development and to ensure that human remains, should they be recovered, were treated appropriately. Works were undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) compiled by the current author in 2015 and submitted as a condition of planning. Works were recorded photographically and by means of notes, drawings and a simple survey at a scale of 1:100. All works were archived under the site code RAB/01/19.

5.0 Recorded Observations

The concrete slabs underlying the existing parquet flooring proved to be of substantial thickness (in places up to 100mm) and required considerable effort to remove. In several areas it was noted that the slabs had been lain on an earlier cement and gravel floor of unknown date but unlikely to be older than the mid-20th century. This in turn sealed occasionally wet sand and clay with frequent fragmentary slate and occasional rubble within which surface three graves were recorded:

Grave 1 located close to the tower within the northern aisle most probably represents the earliest of the burials and measured just over 2m in length. It was constructed of stone, brick and mortar and is assumed to contain the inhumation of a large adult.

Grave 2 in the southern aisle was of brick construction sealed with lias slabs and measured 1.45m in length and is assumed to be that of a child or young adult.

Grave 3 lying immediately east of the porch was also of brick construction and clearly represented a double inhumation recorded in the memorials on the wall above. The first being that of Joseph Durston, late Rector of Compton-Greenfield in Gloucestershire who died April 17th 1770. The second is most probably that of his wife Benedicta Durston who 'caused the monument to be erected' and who died August 20th 1781 or alternatively that of William Durston of the Parish of Mark whose plaque lies adjacent and who died November 13th 1806

6.0 Finds

No archaeological material was recovered during the course of the works and no inhumations were disturbed.

References

Somerset County Council
Historic Environment Service

'Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook' (2017)

English Heritage

'Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England' (2005)

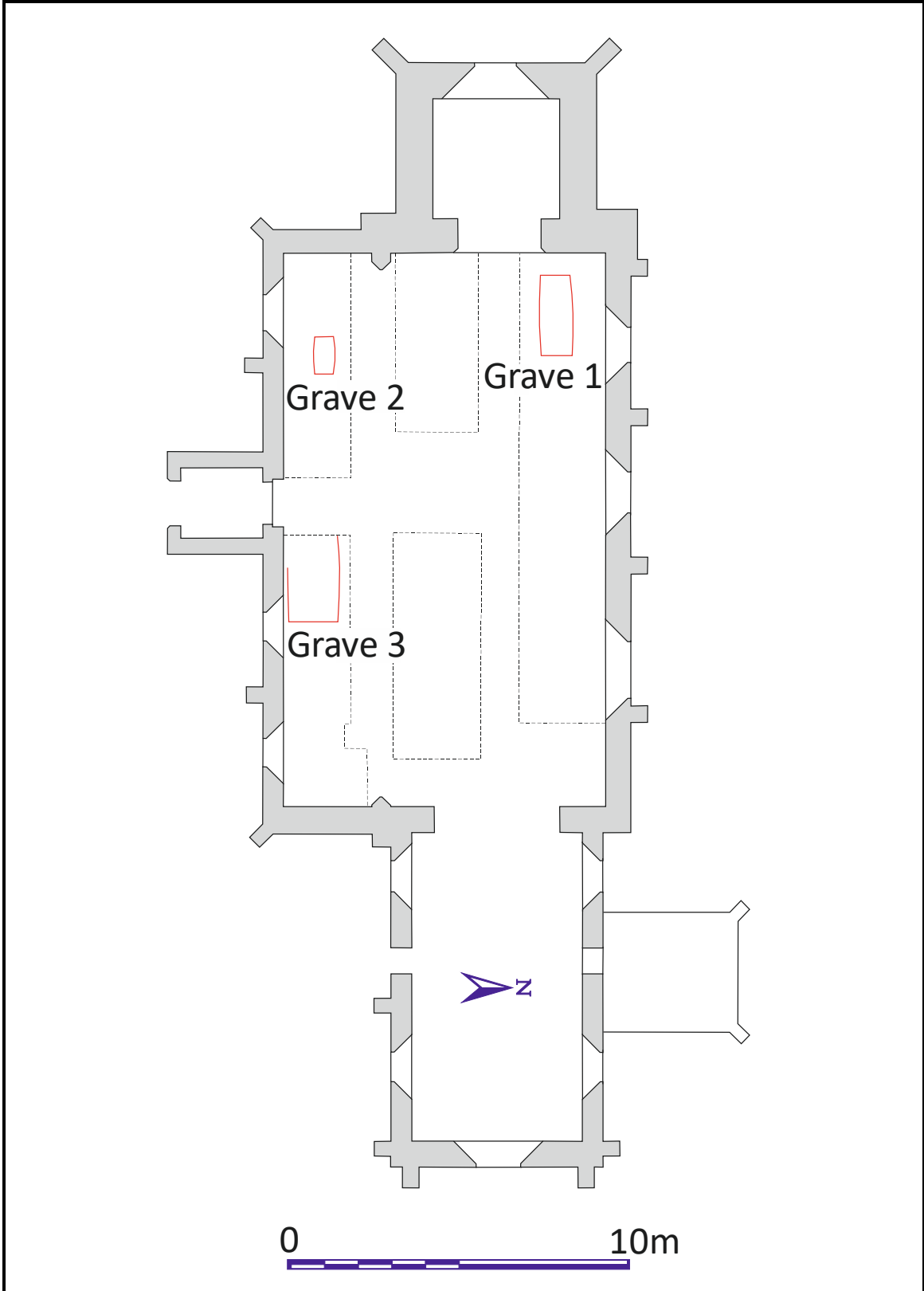


Fig 1: Location of Identified Graves



Above left: Initial removal of concrete floor in north aisle showing depth. Above right: Grave 1 from the east. Scale 2m. Below: Grave 2 from the north. Scale 1m





Above: Grave 3 from the north. Scale 2m. Below: Grave 3 from the east. Scales 1m



A Written Scheme of Investigation to provide for an Archaeological Watching Brief at St Mary's Church, Berrow

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1.0 Introduction

Proposals have been submitted for an internal re-ordering at St Mary's Church, Berrow, involving the removal and subsequent reinstatement of some of the existing pews at a lower level to allow for disabled access. The works will involve a minimal reduction of the existing floor level to accommodate these changes. With due regard to the archaeological potential that may arise as a consequence of these works the following Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) to supply an archaeological watching brief is presented for approval by R. A. Broomhead (Field Archaeologist) on behalf of Stone Ecclesiastical, Architects for the PCC.

2.0 The Site

St Mary's Church lies at ST 29385246 on the edge of the present village of Berrow located amongst the sand dunes which seal an earlier settlement. Constructed primarily of local limestone, the body of the church is largely 13th century but contains elements of an earlier 12th century structure (HER PRN 10453). There is no record of any recent archaeological work being undertaken within the present building. Current proposals involve an internal re-ordering necessitating a partial lifting of the existing floor either side of the aisles which are paved by unadorned and relatively unworn lias slabs which suggest a possible post-reformation origin. The existing pews standing on a raised parquet floor lying in places on a thick concrete slab are to be lowered to the level of the aisles to accommodate disabled access.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief will be to preserve either in situ or by record any archaeological features which may be observed or disturbed by the proposed works and to ensure that human remains, should they be encountered, will be recorded either in situ or recovered for reburial.

The objectives of the watching brief will be to enhance knowledge and understanding of the development of Church and its environs. The results will be published in the form of a report to the client and to the Local Planning Authority

(LPA). Should remains or information of significant importance be recovered then publication to a national body may also be required.

Data gathered by these observations may be used to inform any final design proposals within the development and provision will be made by the client for consultation with the relevant authority should this be necessary.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 The Watching Brief

All archaeological works will be conducted in line with guidelines provided by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and in accordance with any recommendations made by the County Archaeological Officer.

All works involving disturbance to the fabric of the church following the removal of the existing pews are to be monitored and arrangements will be made with the onsite contractor to ensure the attendance of an archaeologist during such operations.

Provision will be made by the onsite contractor to temporarily halt works to allow sufficient time for the hand excavation and recording of any archaeological deposits, structures or features which may be exposed by the works. Unexpected significant archaeological discoveries will be reported to the client and the LPA who will be consulted with regards the best way to proceed. It is not proposed that archaeological structures or features, if encountered will be investigated beyond the extent of the planned excavations unless deemed necessary to accommodate design changes which may be advised by the LPA.

The LPA will be notified as to when the works are to commence so that a program of monitoring visits to ensure the satisfactory progress of the project may be arranged.

4.2 Onsite Recording

A written record will be maintained of the works and all features and contexts will be recorded using standard pro-forma context recording sheets under the site code RAB-02-16. Any exposed features will be hand excavated and planned at 1:20 utilising dimensionally-stable media. If possible, recorded archaeology will be drawn in section at 1:10 and levelled to Ordnance Datum from the local Bench Mark.

A full and adequate photographic record utilising monochrome prints, colour slides and/or digital media will be made of all works and any archaeological features which may be exposed.

4.3 Human Remains

Any situ burials will be notified to the relevant authorities. Human remains will be recorded and if necessary recovered with due regard to methodology outlined in '*Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England*' (EH 2005). Any randomly displaced human bone will be recovered and bagged for reburial. Should extensive human remains be located requiring detailed examination and removal, arrangements will be made by the onsite contractor to ensure the screening of such remains from public view.

4.4 Treatment of Finds

Any archaeological artefacts identified will be recovered and analysed. Stratified artefacts will be recovered and related to the contexts from which they were derived. All finds will be cleaned and labelled on site with the appropriate site code and museum accession number. Any artefacts requiring conservation will be removed to the local museums service and advice sought.

Finds covered by legislation under the Treasure Act of 1996 will be recorded and reported to the Coroner and Museum Service and dealt with according to the provisions of the Act.

4.5 Environmental Sampling

Provision will be made for the collection of material appropriate for environmental analysis and/or potential radio carbon dating if considered necessary by the on-site archaeologist or local authority.

5.0 Post-excavation analysis and reporting

5.1 Site Analysis

Post excavation analysis will be conducted in-house unless specialist input is required. No external contractors have as yet been consulted as yet in this regard.

5.2 Report

The results of the watching brief will published in a report comprising, the aims and objectives of the project, a written description of the works and the features observed and recovered together with an interpretation of their significance (if any). The report will include all appropriate plans and photographs, details of finds, material and environmental analysis if necessary.

The report will be completed and submitted within 3 months of the completion of the project. The report will be available in both digital (PDF) and A4 paper formats and an entry onto OASIS submitted. The project will be recorded upon the Somerset Historic Environment Record as PRN 34763

5.3 Archive

The watching brief will result in an archive of notes, drawings and photographs which will be organised to English Heritage (MAP2) standards and deposited with Somerset Heritage Services, Taunton. Accession Number TTNCM 7/2016 Agreement will be sought from the Church authorities for the deposition of any finds with the same. A digital archive will also be prepared.

6.0 Resources and Programming

Principle archaeology will be conducted by R. A. Broomhead (BA Hons) Field Archaeologist of 30 years experience who holds Public Liability Insurance with Towergate Risk Solutions, Policy No. 00113 a copy of which is available if required.

A timescale for these works is not given. The onsite archaeological presence will be dependent upon the contractors program of works.

Reference:

DCMS & English Heritage	<i>'PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide'</i> (2010)
English Heritage	<i>'Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England'</i> (2005)
Institute for Archaeologists	<i>'Standard & Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures'</i> (Revised 2008)
Somerset County Council Historic Environment Service	<i>'Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook'</i> (2009)