

# An Archaeological Watching Brief

at:

The Church of St Mary

Fownhope

Herefordshire

HR1 4PQ



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Watching Brief carried out: October 25<sup>th</sup> 2021

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at:

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for:

The Churchwardens and PCC

by:

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## 2 Summary

Considering the age of the church with its known development from an early small Norman chapel there was a possibility that some evidence of earlier structures or land use may have been encountered during the works. However, no structures of archaeological interest were encountered and the few finds were unstratified within the backfill of the wall.

## 3 Introduction

### 3.1 Location

St Mary's Church Fownhope is situated at the junction of Capler Lane and the B4224 road to Hereford at the south-east end of the village of Fownhope, above the east bank of the River Wye, some 10.5km to the south-east of the centre of Hereford, at NGR SO 58103 34273 (Figure & 2, Page 2).



Figure 1. Location of Fownhope in Herefordshire.

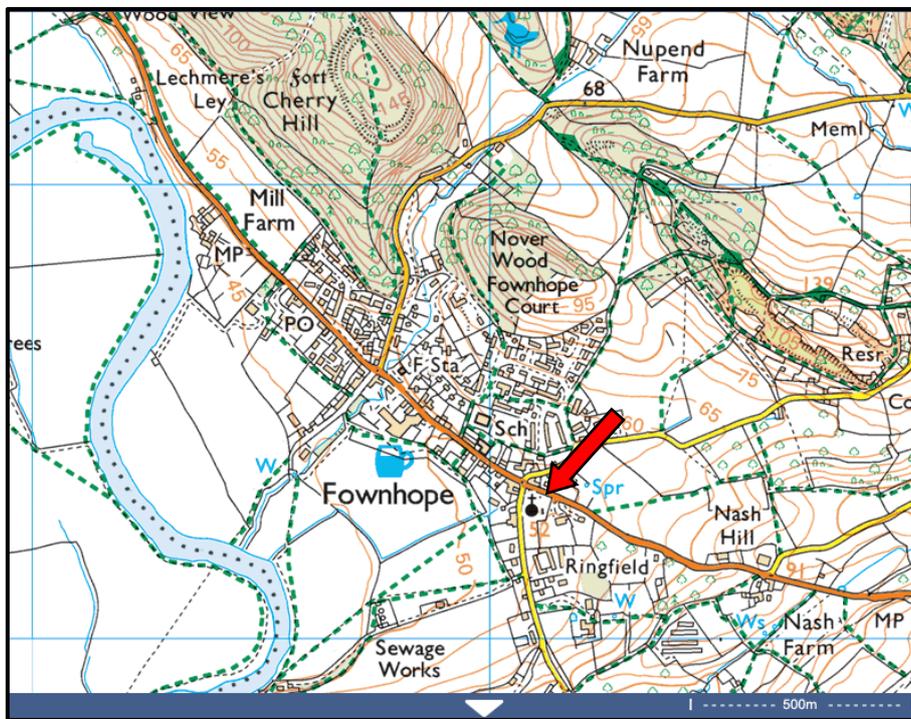


Figure 2. Location of St Mary's Church, Fownhope.

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### 3.2 Work required

Church and Site Archaeological Services were appointed by the PCC and Churchwardens of St Mary's Church Fownhope to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief during the dismantling of an unstable eight metre section of the Grade II Listed churchyard boundary wall facing Capler Lane, along with some ground-reduction behind it, in order to prevent its collapse onto the roadway.

## 4 History and Structure

The present church consists of a nave, a chancel, a central tower with shingled spire, a south aisle, a north porch, and a south chapel (now a vestry). The church of St Mary is one of the longest in Herefordshire, stretching almost 120 feet in length. The central core including the tower is early 12<sup>th</sup> century, with a later 14<sup>th</sup>15<sup>th</sup> century shingled spire. The east end of the nave is also 12<sup>th</sup> century, with a mid-13<sup>th</sup> century south aisle and a 14<sup>th</sup> century chancel and south chapel. The north porch is early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Construction is mainly of coursed sandstone rubble with ashlar dressings. The medieval church was restored in 1881 and is listed Grade I for its special architectural and historic interest. The churchyard wall where the Watching Brief was to be carried out is listed Grade II in its own right.

The church exhibits a 12<sup>th</sup> century Tympanum, now placed internally to protect the carvings from the weather; it is not known precisely over which door is was originally set. Externally there is considerable Romanesque carving still to be seen around some of the windows and tower corners, and throughout the structure there are visible architectural features from the Norman, Early English, Decorated, and Perpendicular periods.

## 5 Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief is: ***'to allow within the resources available the preservation by record of archaeological deposits the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or potentially disruptive works'***.

The primary objective of this watching brief at the Church of St Mary Fownhope was to ensure that **any** previously unrecorded archaeological features deposits and artefacts exposed during the ground disturbance works were adequately recorded, interpreted and reported within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices in order to satisfy the stated aims of the project, and comply with the Code of Conduct and other relevant regulations of ClfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeology).

## 6 Methodology

### 6.1 Methods and techniques

The work was dug by hand. Where necessary, local investigation was carried out using a trowel.

The archaeologist undertook the watching and recording of the work and the sifting of the spoil for finds.

### 6.2 Weather conditions

The watching brief was carried out on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021 during dry and sunny autumn weather.

### 6.3 Recording

The recording of the work was done in three formats:

1. Photographs were taken in digital colour format at a minimum resolution of 5 megapixels and stored as .jpeg files.
2. Hand sketches were made on site along with measurements.
3. Records and reports were produced and stored as computer word processor files

### 6.4 Health and Safety

All works were carried out to the requirements of current Health and Safety regulations.

### 6.5 Archaeological Standards

All work was undertaken in accordance with The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs, December 2014.12.1 (Updated October 2020).

### 6.6 Work required

The existing churchyard wall which showed signs of bulging towards the roadway was to be taken down to the road level by hand using crowbars and hand tools to break through the lime mortar. A section of the bank behind was to be removed to remove weight pressing on the wall. The wall would then be rebuilt using the existing stones held in place by traditional lime mortar and backfilled with rubble.

## 7 The Watching Brief

Once the Highways Department had erected warning signs and cones to protect the workforce work began on removing the existing wall stones. This was accomplished by use of crowbars and hand tools. The removed stone was taken to the area of the church car parking for storage and reuse.



Figure 3. Looking south along Capler Lane from the B4224 junction.

The stone was removed along an eight metre length and was taken down in courses along the whole length required in order that the stone was reusable without becoming contaminated with rubble fill or soil. The total height removed was five feet, the total length was eight metres, and the depth removed was 0.75 metres.

Dismantling showed that the wall had been constructed with one face of stone held in place by lime mortar and backfilled with stone rubble. Some of the facing stones were as wide as 0.5m and laid as stretchers, whilst smaller ones were laid at 90 degrees as headers.



Figure 4. Work underway to dismantle the churchyard wall.



Figure 1. The exposed wall core during dismantling.

During the removal of the wall no features of archaeological interest were encountered. Within the fill behind the wall and below the turf covering the finds were limited to one complete dark brown bottle (which resembled a stout beer bottle); one rusty handmade iron nail; a fragment of cow rib bone, one fragment of clay roof tile; three fragments of handmade post-medieval red brick; and three random fragments of human bone (one fragment of an arm radius and two carpal hand bones).

No pottery was recovered from within the backfill, nor any other items which would have suggested a firm date for the original wall construction. Fownhope was well known however for its lime production during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The lime mortar holding the wall together was old and degraded with time, so it may well have dated to that period. There was evidence along the wall for small areas of previous repair where modern cement had been used. The eight metre section dismantled during these works will be rebuild using traditional methods.

All human remains recovered were reinterred within the churchyard.

## 8 **Finds**

### Ceramics

3 fragments of handmade brick

1 fragment of clay roof tile

### Glass

1 complete brown (stout?) bottle

### Bones

1 fragment of rib, cow

### Metal

1 corroded handmade iron nail

## 9 Photographs



Figure 2. Dismantling of the wall using hand tools.



Figure 3. View north along Capler Lane towards the B4224 junction.



Figure 4. The finished excavations. Scales 2m.



Figure 9. View along completed works looking north-east. Scales 2m.

## 10 **Copyright**

The copyright of this report remains the property of Church and Site Archaeological Services.

## 11 **Deposition of Report and Finds**

- 11.1 Church and Site Archaeology 9 Lilac Drive Monmouth – finds, report and digital photograph archive.
- 11.2 The PCC and Churchwardens of St Mary's Church Fownhope - report.
- 11.3 Diocese of Hereford, Diocesan Advisory Committee – report.

## 12 **References and Bibliography**

- 12.1 The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists '*Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*' Pub December 2014 (Updated June & October 2020).
- 12.2 UK Institute of Conservation's '*Guidelines for the treatment of Finds from Archaeological Sites*'.
- 12.3 The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists '*Standards and Guidance for the collection documentation conservation and research of archaeological materials*' December 2014.
- 12.4 '*Management of Archaeological Projects*' English Heritage 1991.
- 12.5 '*Guidance for Best Practice for Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England*'. English Heritage and the Church of England 2005 (Updated February 2017).
- 12.6 The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Technical Paper no 13: '*Excavation and Post Excavation Treatment of Cremated and Exhumed Human Remains*' McKinley and Roberts 1993.

## 13 **Acknowledgements**

- 13.1 To the contractor, Joe Price, for his help and forbearance.

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