

Old St Oswald's, Fulford

Archaeology Report – Cutting II

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St Oswald's Old Church, Fulford

CUTTING II (1980) (figs 000-000)

Introduction

This consists of three areas; IIA, a small cut by the west side of the NW corner of the nave, was the initial cutting made by PAR and LV, clearing up a 1980 builders' hole. This was incorporated into a larger area IIB, both inside and to the north of a modern brick annexe; this area was fully excavated to natural. A 40cm baulk separated IIB from IIC, a large area to the west. This was not excavated beyond the level needed to define the extent of a large cobble foundation (206) encountered in IIB. The unexcavated layers here and the baulk will be useful for future excavators to extend their understanding of this area.

Phase II.1

The earliest context here is 217, a depression or ditch; only the irregular northern side was in the area of the excavation, the rest extending below the west wall of the nave, or cut away by the foundations of the north wall of the tower. In the main area of IIA/b, it was defined only as a shallow cut in the natural (228); but in the section below the west wall of the nave (A-B, fig 000), the fill (217A) could be discerned a further up to 10cm higher up. It is likely that this feature was cut from a higher ground level, and was therefore more substantial than it might appear in fig 000.

The fill was a stone-free dark brown soil, rather darker than the general soil above the feature; with no apparent inclusion of any clayey

subsoil. In 217A were found the earliest items in the whole excavation: a few flint flakes; mortar flecks (intrusive or Roman); a fragment of tile, possibly Roman; a fragment of ^{plae} green glass, possibly also Roman, perhaps from a cremation bottle; and an Anglo-Saxon hand-made sherd, apparently from a lug (p 000). This is stamped, a stamp of barred semi-circle and half rosette, ^{pass but it cannot be closely dated} ~~Dr Ailsa Mainman (YAT) tells us that the stamp was Type Spong 4D, late rather than early in the 5th century. This seems to be too early to be associated with any Anglo-Saxon church earlier than the present church, which would not be expected before the later 7th century at the earliest, two centuries after the suggested date of the sherd. if the dating is reliable, then the sherd is more likely to be from a local settlement or cemetery, rather the Roman background nearer to the Anglo-Saxon[?]. It has in more recent years (in such contexts at Wharram Percy) been realised that so positive a date cannot be given to such a stamped sherd; however much stamped pottery is characteristic of the early Anglo-Saxon period (AD450-650), stamps can go into the middle Saxon period.~~

Phase II.2

Although there is no stratigraphic relationship between 217 and 206, it is postulated that the latter is secondary. It is a substantial mass of cobbles up to 10cm in longest dimension, packed in sandy clay. No layering was observed in Cutting II, nor any finds incorporated within it; c1.70m of 206 were defined in IIa/b, but a good edge was clear on its south side near the baulk (as in section C-D, fig 000). On the north side, the sides of 206 were falling away to the north, apparently collapsing; nor was the south side clear (as in section A-B, fig 000). A

width of c1m was defined on the west side of the cutting; and this was confirmed by the well-preserved part of 206 in Cutting IIc; the latter was 3.50m in length, and (with the 1.70m in IIa/b and the assumed part in the baulk), the length uncovered was 6.5m

In IIb, it was seen to extend down to the level of the natural sandy clay, or slightly bedded into it (see section C-D), a depth of 60cm. The surface, especially as seen in IIc, was relatively flat. It is suggested that 206 was a substantial foundation for a structure, probably of timber and other organic material: that 206 supported a sill-beam. No impression or other evidence confirmed this, but we might conjecture that such a sill-beam might be c 60cm in width.

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// Also probably of this phase, but not securely associated, was the posthole 224. This had a postpad of coarse-grained limestone. The surviving part of the posthole was up to 15cm in diameter, but the post may have been larger. The fill of the posthole (223), above the padstone, was a mixed bluish-brown soil, with a darker blue centre on the padstone. A bluish colour is often associated with the rotting-down of timber uprights.

Presumably after such a rotting process, the post was dug out (pit 222) (see section C-D); the fill of this was not, above the natural, dissimilar to the general brown sandy soil, 212. If this major post was directly related to the stone foundation 206, we may consider the possibility that it held an internal upright post, such as for a north arcade. This will be discussed further later in this report (p 000).

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In area IIa/b, there was, as noted above, some collapse of the north side of the cobble foundation, 206; and there was some spreading or

bulging of the south side. As this edge of 206 extended below the NW corner of the anave of the present church, there was a further area of large cobbles extending to the south, at least in its lowest part. This south-extending section was subsequently part of the foundation of the later nave west wall (see section A-B, fig 000). The shaded part in the drawing (fig 000) indicates this extension, set back slightly to the east, but here projected onto the actual plane of the section.

It seems very likely that these cobbles are part of the west edge of the same cobble foundation as that whose east edge was found in Cutting I, on the east side of the nave west wall (see above). The width of 206 as 1m, as defined further west in IIc, matches this hypothesis, one metre being the distance from the east edge in I to the cobbles seen on the west edge. If this is accepted, then we have the return from 206 to the south ie the east side of the structure whose north side is represented by 206. The NE of this postulated structure was subsequently defined in Cutting III (see below).

Phase II.3

As we have seen above, the west wall of the present nave (219) was built over the Phase II.2 cobble foundation, 206. As we will see below in the discussion on Cutting III, the west wall here is not primary; but here it is described as if it was structurally a direct successor to the cobble foundation, even if in its present form a rebuild.

The lower part of the new wall is shown in elevation and profile in section A-B, fig 000. Its foundation appears to have been at least partly the reused cobble mass; but, as the elevation shows, there are

some extra stones and clay under the basal course of the masonry: extending down to Phase II.1 features.

The lowest two courses here are of large limestone, with variable tooling. Above these is a chamfered string course, rather irregular and badly weathered; most of the wall face here is plastered; repairs are indicated by a brick in this area.

Probably also of Phase II.3 was the grave 218, with the legs and part of the pelvis of ~~a child skeleton~~ ^(under 12, see p 000), orientated W-E. This appeared to be secondary to the cobble foundation 206, and sealed by a mortar interface (204). The posthole 208 was undated; but may be for a scaffolding of either Phase II.3 or Phase II.4.

Phase II.4

Secondary to the west wall masonry of Phase II.3 are the lowest six courses of the north wall (220) of the tower; these are the foundations of a presumably medieval tower which was replaced by the present brick tower of [date].

The lowest course of 220 was set nearly 20cm into the natural sandy clay 228. There is no evidence of a construction trench to the north, but the mortar interface 204 is likely to represent the builders' activity of Phase II.4, at a ground level of c30.60m AOD.

The six courses of 220 observed were not horizontal, but were sloping down to the west at an angle of up to 50. [?] There had clearly been some instability here, which had probably been the reason for the replacement of the stone tower with the brick version - perhaps it had collapsed. It was noted that the west wall of the nave was also not

vertical to a similar angle, so that the tower courses and those of the nave west wall remained a right angle.

The secondary character of the stone courses 220 were also demonstrated by the incorporation in them of medieval ceramic ^{roof} tile and especially an inverted segment of chamfered block identical to those of the nave visible on either side of the south doorway, with similar diagonal tooling. At the intersection of 220 with 219, the tower courses were 'tucked in' under the nave west wall for at least 50cm. Above this, the eastern face of the brick tower abutted the nave west wall in its four lower courses, but above this it oversails the west wall.

Apart from the tile and chamfer segment noted above, two of the stones of 220 have attached to them patches of brick-tempered mortar, similar to *opus signinum*, and are likely to be of Roman derivation.

Phase II.5

This is represented by the brick tower of [date], discussed in other parts of this report.

Phase II.6

The final phase in this area comprises the construction of a brick store. The foundations of this were set down to c30.50m AOD, in part on the cobbled foundation 204. The basal offset courses (in a construction trench 210) supported a 25 cm wide wall foundation. This was, before 1980, a store, but was then demolished to the then ground level of up [?] to c 30.80m AOD. This had risen since the building activity interface 204, caused by an accumulation of brown sandy soil.

(St Oswald's, Fulford)

CUTTING II 1980

Context descriptions (as per Hawkins table)

- 200 Turf and topsoil inside annexe (brick)
- 201 Floor (brick) of brick annexe (with 213, 214, 215)
- 202 Surface below 201, compacted brown sandy soil with some pebbles and frs of tile and mortar; below 201
- 203 Similar to 202, below 202; sherd Humber Ware; mortar flecks
- 204 Interface represented by mortar line; ?floor; ?alterations to brick tower; cut by 210
- 205 Brown sandy soil, few MOR flecks, tile frs and river or boulder clay cobbles, becoming thick to N side of cutting, where they form 206; tile frs down to this level; sherd of York White Ware and another of Brandsby Ware (see 107)
- 206 Cobbles up to 10cm long; fdn followed to west, beyond tower; fdn for sill beam of superstructure, or for demolished stone building; in trench? 222 may be arcade post; or part of earlier church[?tower] abandoned because of instability
- 207 Line of pebbles, ?interface; not on drawing
- 208 Posthole - ?tower scaffolding; 17cm down below base of 204; pear-shaped SW-NE; 32x27cm
- 209 Fill of 208, yel-br sandy, MOR; animal bone
- 210 Linear E-W cut, constr tr for brick 14
- 211 Fill of 210; green-gl floor tile, stucco, 2 shs of Gritty Ware
- 212 North of tower; mixed sandy soil, pebbles, MOR; ?backfill assoc with 206 and 224
- 213 Brick fdn, E side (see III also)

- 214 Brick fdn, N side, offset externally
- 215 Brick fdn, V side
- 216 Turf and topsoil N of 214, rooty, bricky, very dark; down to 33cm
- 217 E-W cut, depression or ditch
- 217A Fill of 217, dark brown, little subsoil; FL, MOR, Anglo-Saxon stamped sh (Type Spong 4D, ~~incl. barred, semicircular and half rosette, late rather than early 5th century AD~~ tile fr; fr of STEP
S/W pale green glass, medieval or Roman; ?part of cremation bottle (below cobbles in section W wall of nave)
- 218 Grave, lower limbs and pelvis; adult, not extant [?] of immature person [?]; no cut seen
- 219 West wall of nave; Hawkins note: slight neck (?) of foundations related to known existence of cobble foundation 206. The part of the brick tower immediately above (and below?) modern doorway into former annexe abutted against church, but at four courses up and including the string course it oversails the nave and forms the tower's eastern face. Perhaps medieval tower 220 caused heavy damage when it collapsed, perhaps in post-med period; or part of the nave wall removed when tower demolished?
- 220 Foundation of stone tower north wall. Construction with rubble filling between outer blocks, with much buff mortar; two pieces of tile wedged in north elevation, decisively *in situ*, dating the tower to later than advent of tile in York. 220 secondary to nave wall, and, although stone similar to nave, it is very different in dressing:- very hammer-dressed in contrast to diagonal tooling of nave; not cut to same size, or as

regularly. 220 mortared even in foundations; foundations of nave not so. The surface of 220 stones is dropping slightly to west, 5° or less; approx same angle from horizontal as NW corner of nave is off vertical - ie still right angle.

Six courses surviving below brick tower; secondary character shown by tile, MOR, lapping up to, and especially by the incorporation of a segment of string (chamfer) course upside down with dressed ends with fine diagonal tooling like that on either side of south doorway.

220 is tucked in underneath W wall of ?C12 church for at least 50cm

Brick tempered 'Roman' MOR in 220 foundations.

- 221 Layers of cobbles of 206 below nave wall; as 107 1980 internal excavation; projected in section, N-S
- 222 Postpit to remove 224; sub-circular cut, 4cm N of tower
- 223 Fill of 222; separated from tower only by 4cm of rooty disturbed soil; bluish-brown soil and redistributed natural with darker blue centre where there is a padstone (sandstone); ?structural or scaffold; associated with cobble foundations; no MOR or stone chippings
- 224 Posthole: ?arcade. Hawkins comments: another feature which may be associated with cobble fdns; large (0.5 [m/cm] diam) postpit; just to S of E-W cobbles. A post in this pit had been set on a padstone of half-burnt coarse limestone (or rougher sandstone) and was later dug out. While this could be an

early scaffold pit, it could be an arcade post. In the absence of any other stone evidence here, the cobble footing is interpreted as the foundation of a sill beam for a timber structure. This might be associated with the pre-Conquest cross piece (see p 000)

225

Fill of 224