

**LAMBLEY, HOLY TRINITY**  
(SK 63124522)

Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned on behalf of Lambley Parochial Church Council to carry out archaeological recording during construction of an external north extension (in 2012) and internally the re-flooring of the tower and west end of the nave (in 2013). The church, which is not mentioned in Domesday, lies at the centre of the old village of Lambley and comprises a tower, nave, chancel and modern vestry. The first historical record for a church on site maybe 1171 when an annual contribution was made to Southwell Minster (Hughes 1986, 2). This corresponds with the oldest visible fabric of the rounded tower arch with waterleaf capitals c.1170 to 1190 in date. With the exception of the tower and north chancel wall, which was the site of a chantry chapel of c.1340, the church was rebuilt and rededicated in 1480 with funds from the will of the former Lord Treasurer, Ralph de Cromwell who died 1456 (Pevsner 2001, 160).

Excavation in advance of the north extension revealed redeposited compact clay cut by a substantial 1.3m wide stone foundation running east-west parallel to the existing church. This was thought to be the remnants of a former north aisle wall of c.13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century date demolished as part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding of the church. This north aisle foundation together with the former two-storey north chapel indicates the church was much larger by the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century than present. The subsequent decrease in size may have been due to population changes of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The findings of this excavation were summarised in *TTSN* 116 (Elliott & Webb 2012, 27-28).

Inside the church excavation within the tower to a depth of c.0.4m revealed a basic stratigraphic sequence of compact redeposited clay similar to that encountered in the area of the north extension. This was covered by several later spreads. A number of pottery sherds were found close to the tower foundations, possibly within a hard to distinguish tower wall foundation trench. Pottery present included Shelly, Stamford, and Splashed wares, which together suggest a late 12th century date, corresponding with the date of the tower arch. Also present were a small number of features including two apparent infant burials. These burials (potentially late medieval to 18<sup>th</sup> century in date) comprised shallow sub-rectangular pits c.1m x 0.45m in size. Only partially exposed both were left *in-situ*.

Excavation across the west end of the nave revealed similar redeposited compact clay as found in the tower and north extension. This was both covered by later spreads and cut by a number of features. This included several stone foundations, pits and postholes as well as one further infant burial.

Amongst the stone foundations exposed within the limits of the existing 15<sup>th</sup> century nave were apparently two former phases of earlier nave construction. The earliest phase consisted of the apparent truncated remains of both former south and west walls of the nave. These survived as two sets of greyish-white sandstone (Skerry) foundations c.0.9m wide, with the stones pitched upwards at an angle, resembling the lower course of herringbone work. A corresponding north wall only survived as a soil filled robber trench. This gave an internal width dimension of 5.3m for the former nave.

The second phase of foundations appeared to represent a 1.84m westward extension to the nave. It consisted of a south wall (abutting the west wall of the earlier phase) and two halves of a west wall (which appear to have been truncated by the later addition of the tower arch). The north wall largely survived as a soil filled robber trench. These foundations differed in construction from the earlier phase, with an outer face of large stones and a rubble core of smaller stones. The internal dimension of this phase of nave construction appeared slightly smaller at c.5.1m wide.

Exposed to the northeast of the tower arch cut into the compact clay was a stone filled circular pit c.0.9m in diameter, a former font soak-away. Lying offset above this was a 1.38m x 0.86m rectangular stone foundation one course thick, the former foundation for the church font. Re-used stones present within the foundation included two fragments of a 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century tapering, coped, gravestone decorated in relief with a cross possessing squared

terminals. Also present was part of a well-worn fragment of an alabaster grave-marker or monument.

At the east end of the nave close to the tower arch a shallow sub-rectangular pit 0.9m x 0.38m in size was found to be a further infant burial. As this lay below the level of the groundwork it was possible to preserve this *in-situ*. There was a noticeable general absence of disarticulated bone and other burials (including 19<sup>th</sup> century burial shafts) typically found within most churches. Several further small pits representing apparent postholes were preserved unexcavated and remain undated. However, many of these are likely to be medieval in date possibly relating to scaffolding used during past phases of construction, while others maybe associated with a former 18<sup>th</sup> century west gallery.

Lying in the centre of the west end of the nave was a large rectangular sunken stone built structure with perforated brick floor, c.3.1m x 1.5m in size and 0.7m deep. The structure was aligned north to south in direct line with the north and south doorways of the nave. Ceramic drains ran from both doorways into the top of the structure, which had been backfilled with 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century brick and stone including two gravestone fragments. Initially thought to be part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century heating system it maybe a large internal soak-away.

The exact date of the redeposition of the compact clay found in all excavated areas is unclear but appears to have occurred in order to level the site prior to any church construction. The presence of the two phases of nave construction before the late 12<sup>th</sup> century tower arch suggests an early date for this activity. The use of herringbone work in Nottinghamshire and adjacent areas (similar to that used in the first phase of nave foundations) is known in several churches during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries (e.g. Littleborough, Carlton in Lindrick). This phase of activity may have initially represented a chapel or church constructed in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century (therefore not recorded in Domesday) and closely connected with the adjacent developing manorial complex of the Cromwell family. The 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century pottery found on site may originate from domestic activity associated with this manorial complex, which from a rental of 1459 can be seen to have extended up to the western part of the church (Weir 1981, 76-77). The second phase of nave foundations extended the building only c.1.9m westwards, possibly to facilitate the addition of a more elaborate west entrance or west porch. The addition of the tower appears to have been later due to the damage and alteration that appears to have occurred to the west wall foundation beneath the tower arch.

The 2013 excavations were successful in identifying significant previously unknown earlier phases of church construction adding to the limited corpus of such recorded remains within the county. Due to the limited depth of the groundwork many of the remains exposed within the church were preserved *in-situ*. It is hoped a more detailed report of all the findings will be published within a future volume of Thoroton.

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## **Bibliography**

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Figure 1: Looking west towards the tower arch showing stone wall foundations exposed at the west end of the nave.

Figure 2: Looking southwest showing two sets of earlier nave foundations, with west wall of pitched foundation abutted by later phase faced with large stones and a rubble core.

Figure 3: Rectangular font foundation containing re-used stones including cross-slab in upper right-hand corner.