

Community Archaeology Study Days 2008/9



Recording Churches
With Anthony Masinton
Holy Trinity Church, Goodramgate, York
24th May 2008

Feedback from the study day:

'Extremely informative and instructive.'

'I was amazed at what Holy Trinity could reveal about the past when explained.'

The study of churches can provide us with very useful information about past communities, architecture, and religious beliefs. They incorporate many different styles and functions. These styles changed over time, from the Norman period onwards, allowing for greater ornamentation and architectural innovation. The various styles used in churches reflect the changing attitudes to Christianity and its followers through the centuries. The local church provided the main gathering place for the community. Aside from common functions such as prayer services, weddings, christenings and funerals, churches also provided places of safety and social communion. Churches thus provided a major link to social life.

This study day focused on recording the many different kinds of information present in a church. We used Holy Trinity Church in Goodramgate, York as an example. This church dates mainly from the fifteenth century, but earlier features remain from the twelfth century. The church was modified on a regular basis until the early nineteenth century. It contains significant examples of fifteenth century stained glass, along with seventeenth century wooden pews. Features such as a Medieval font and post-Medieval pulpit provide important

examples of changing church styles. A graveyard, along with a few memorials inside the church, provides information about some of the population of the area. An archaeological investigation in 1998 discovered brightly coloured Medieval floor tiles as well as evidence that the original floor had been substantially raised to allow for more burials. Holy Trinity is now maintained by the Churches Conservation Trust, which seeks to preserve this important example of a medieval church. Recording this church allowed us to see just how much it had changed over the years.

