

St Mary the Virgin, Mirfield

Dunbottle Lane Wall Design and Access Statement, Incorporating Heritage Statement

Diocese of Leeds

Archdeaconry: Halifax

Deanery: Dewsbury

Postcode: WF14 9HY

Listing Grade: II* / Scheduled Monument

Report prepared by:

Stephen Dixon

BA (Hons) M.Arch RIBA CA

RIBA-accredited Conservation Architect

of Calls Architecture Limited



Artist's Impression of Wall Reinstatement

Contents

1. Introduction
2. History and Description
3. Existing Wall
4. Design
5. Access
6. Heritage Statement



1. Introduction

1.01 Background

The Grade II* listed church of St Mary was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott and dates from 1871. Part of the boundary wall of the churchyard has collapsed.

Mirfield Team Parish and The Friends of St Mary's Community Heritage Site are working together to seek solutions to the collapsed section of boundary wall along Dunbottle Lane. The wall was blown down in storms in 2008 and has remained in a collapsed state since, with only temporary Heras fencing to protect the opening.

The wall divides the footpath from the motte, a scheduled ancient monument. The land falls away from the wall to the ditch and an area of standing water at the foot of the motte.

1.02 Ownership

The land is within the ownership of the Parochial Church Council of St Mary's Church, Mirfield.

1.03 Pre-Application Consultations

The design team have consulted with various parties in the lead up to this application due to the particular sensitivities of the site. The initial stages of survey, design and enquiry have sought to identify the requirements and permissions for the wall rebuild from key stakeholders. Various approvals to the overall design will be required in consultation with other specialists. These are outlined below:

1.031 Kirklees Council Highways

We have discussed the proposals and options with Kirklees Council Highways Structures Section. Following review of the structure with an engineer,

it is concluded that the repairs will not be liable to technical approval by Kirklees Highways, as the retaining sections are substantially unaffected and stable.

We have contacted Kirklees Streetworks team and established that no permit will be required to close the foot-way with appropriate traffic management and pedestrian walkway on the road. The contractor is to inform Kirklees Streetworks team of the start and end dates.

1.032 Historic England

The reinstatement will need consent from the Secretary of State via Scheduled Monument Consent. We have been in touch with Historic England to discuss the application.

1.033 Building Control

Not applicable as the proposals are landscape features and not associated with a building.

1.034 Diocese of Leeds

Faculty approval will be required.

1.035 Tree Preservation Orders

The proposals are not anticipated to affect the above or below ground roots of the adjacent trees that are subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

1.036 Archaeology

The design team have now established a low impact repair of the wall which does not extend to below ground alterations or the existing footings. The project therefore has archaeological impact and mitigation is not considered necessary.



2. Brief History and Description

Overview

The wall to be rebuilt forms a boundary to St Mary's Churchyard, in front of the medieval Castle Hall Hill motte. The boundary line appears to cut across the original ditch line, probably to widen the road in the past. The plan of the church and surrounding area by Charles H Marriott in 1871 shows the Dunbottle Lane wall in red along with the 'New Church' and was possibly built at the time of the Sir George Gilbert Scott church (WYAS Catalogue Finding Number WDP1/136). Many historic plans before this period indicate the ditch being more even around the motte circumference.

Archaeological Background

A survey of nearby land was conducted in October 2014 by Archaeological Services WYAS. The document can be found on the Archaeology Data Service website at the following link:

<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/browse/issue.xhtml?recordId=1155194&recordType=GreyLitSeries>

Whilst the report does not focus on the area in question, it contains helpful map regression and background history which has been consulted as part of the research and design process.

Scheduled Monument Description

Castle Hall Hill motte and bailey castle is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. Note that the 'modern walls' surrounding are excluded, which is deemed to include the wall to be rebuilt along Dunbottle Lane.

The details of the Historic England designation are as follows:

Reasons for Designation

Motte and bailey castles are medieval fortifications introduced into Britain by the Normans. They comprised a large conical mound of earth or rubble, the motte, surmounted by a palisade and a stone or timber tower. In a majority of examples an embanked enclosure containing additional buildings, the bailey, adjoined the motte. Motte castles and motte-and-bailey castles acted as garrison forts during offensive military operations, as strongholds, and, in many cases, as aristocratic residences and as centres of local or royal administration. Built in towns, villages and open countryside, motte and bailey castles generally occupied strategic positions dominating their immediate locality and, as a result, are the most visually impressive monuments of the early post-Conquest period surviving in the modern landscape. Over 600 motte castles or motte-and-bailey castles are recorded nationally, with examples known from most regions. As one of a restricted range of recognised early post-Conquest monuments, they are particularly important for the study of Norman Britain and the development of the feudal system. Although many were occupied for only a short period of time, motte castles continued to be built and occupied from the 11th to the 13th centuries, after which they were superseded by other types of castle.

Castle Hall Hill is a well-preserved example of an early motte and bailey castle whose historical associations are well documented. The relatively



Information sheet displayed in the grounds

2. Brief History and Description (continued)

undisturbed nature of the castle mound indicates that the remains of its keep will survive well.

Details

Castle Hall Hill motte and bailey castle is situated adjacent to the nineteenth century parish church of St. Mary in Mirfield.

The bailey is occupied by the church and its graveyard, both of which are in current ecclesiastical use, and this area is not at present included in the scheduling. The motte, which would have carried a timber keep, is a conical mound c.10m high and with a diameter of c.20m surrounded by a ditch c.8m wide and 5m deep. On the east side the ditch is divided by a causeway which joined the motte to the bailey where ancillary and garrison buildings would have stood along with pens for stock and horses. The castle was built between 1086 and 1159 either by Svein son of Alric or by Adam his son. Its purpose was to oversee some of the estates of the Honour of Pontefract of which these two men were successively the most powerful knights. After Adam's death without male heirs in 1159, the estate was divided and the castle reduced in status. It was not abandoned, however, and was known as the castle of Mirfield throughout the Middle Ages. Features which are excluded from the scheduling are the modern walls and railings surrounding the monument and signs erected inside. The ground beneath these exclusions is, however, included.

Separate listings are given to the following elements surrounding the motte:

St Marys Church, 1871 - G.V II*

Tower of Old Church of St. Mary - G.V. II

Tablet fixed to tower of Old Church - G.V. II

Stocks 20 yards to south of main gate - G.V. II

Boundary wall, railings, gates & gatepiers to south & west sides of Church of St. Mary - G.V. II

Raised grave slab to Wraith family - G.V. II

It is also noted that Tree Preservation Orders cover much of the extensive churchyard.



Interpretation board, St Mary's Churchyard

3. Existing Wall

3.1 Dunbottle Lane Elevation

Description:

The sandstone wall is generally around 1.8m high from footpath level and 450mm wide, with triangular shaped coping stones. The wall and banking behind retain the tarmac footpath and highway, in the area of collapse. Further north, the wall retains the ground behind the footpath.

The footpath has a gentle slope down to the south and the walling generally follows this line rather than the true horizontal, to give a constant height.

The wall stones above footpath level are long and thin (50mm) , regularly coursed in two skins with a rubble core.

Immediately adjacent to the collapsed section of wall on the street side are a British Telegraph pole and street-light.

Walling stone and the triangular copings from the collapsed section are part stored in the moat and part stored off-site we understand.

Condition:

The wall southwest of the motte has collapsed down to a couple of courses above footpath level. Either side of the collapsed section, the wall has a lean towards the motte, more notably to the north end.

Undermining of the foundation of the wall has been mooted as the reason for the collapse in the past though there is little evidence of this on site and survey with a structural engineer show that the retaining elements remain intact, albeit with need for repairs, re-pointing and consolidation of the masonry. There is no evident collapse of the footpath or highway and the lamp post and telegraph pole appear stable.

There is no buttressing of what is a tall and slender wall. The wall is in an exposed part of the site. Pointing has been eroded and washed away though weathering and also particularly at lower levels by salt spray.

Vegetation growth into the joints has been significant and over a prolonged period has lead to movement in the structure of the wall base. A combination of slenderness, erosion of pointing, vegetation and exposure to severe wind are considered to be the principal reasons for collapse.

The 'temporary' Heras fencing has also now badly distorted after 13 years in place and is unsafe.



Composite photo from Dunbottle Lane, April 2021

3. Existing Wall

3.2 Motte Elevation

Description:

The upper section of wall facing the motte is similar to that facing Dunbottle Lane though the stones are not as regularised and flat as those facing the road. Below footpath level, the walling stones become thicker and more rounded still, with inconsistent coursing and a more weathered and eroded finish.

Condition:

The walling below the footpath level has been significantly affected by vegetation growth with thick roots exploiting and opening up coursing joints in several areas. Prior to this recent inspection, much of the vegetation covering the wall had been removed in order to allow better access. This has been particularly helpful to review the condition of the below path walling and to allow the proposals to be considered in detail.

Further inspection of the south end of the wall is required when further removal of vegetation is carried out.

Joints are very open throughout the lower levels and in need of full, deep re-pointing and consolidation of the masonry. There are several large voids in the wall where stonework must be replaced.

The top 400mm of wall behind the lamppost has a minor lean towards the motte but at the base is reasonably true. There is no substantial evidence of undermining of the walls foundation from the adjacent standing water. The condition of below ground structures has not been excavated or inspected.



Large voids, open joints and thick roots in the lower sections of the wall facing the motte



Composite photo from motte, April 2021

3. Existing Wall

3.3 Site Photos



Vegetation cover to lower wall in September 2017



View from St Mary's Tower, 24 June 2015



View from St Mary's Tower, 24 June 2015



Blue plaque at the western entrance to St Marys's

3. Existing Wall

3.3 Site Photos



Coping profile, loose on the ground



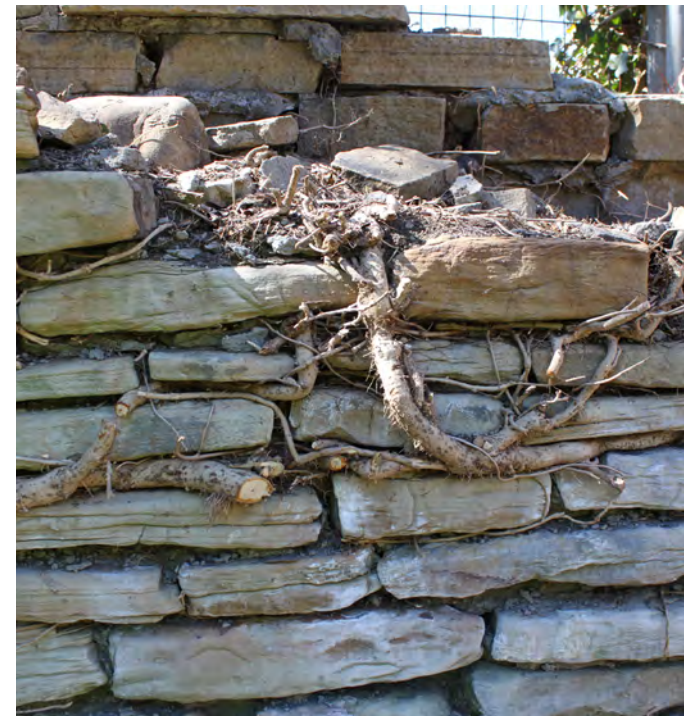
Walling stones stored in the dry ditch



Detail of wall at collapsed end, April 2021



Deeply recessed joints at lower levels, loose pointing



Roots have forced the stones apart in some areas.

4. Design

The proposals are to rebuild the wall on a consolidated and repaired base, to a reduced height. The reduced height of the wall will be along a circa 23.6m section of the wall, stepping to ensure a minimum protection from fall of 1.1m from each side. The proposals are shown in Calls Architecture drawing no. 340. This proposal has the following benefits and enhancements:

- Improved public visibility of the Motte from Dunbottle Lane
- Reduced slenderness ratio of the wall.
- Reduced wind resistance.
- Reduced loading on the older base walls
- Re-use of original materials with improved allowance for missing or broken masonry due to reduced walling area.
- No proposals to excavate around the scheduled monument.
- Negligible heritage impact

The repairs will aim to be made up of reclaimed masonry from the collapsed wall, though the off site materials will need to be checked and it may be necessary to supplement these with new stone should there be a shortfall. The copings will be reinstated, with new stone copings to match in shape and tooling only where there is insufficient salvage. New stainless steel ties will aid stability by tying the two leaves, but will be unseen.

All existing masonry will be fully re-pointed in lime mortar. Severely laminated stones will be replaced with new Yorkstone. Some exposed sections of the lower wall will be re-built to vertical. The leaning section of wall will be taken down and re-built. No below ground works or excavations are proposed.



Above: Artist's impression of the re-built boundary wall
Right: As existing photo



5. Access

The access to the church yard will remain unchanged. The new wall will not provide an access to the church yard or the motte.

The boundary wall, when rebuilt, is set at a height to offer adequate guarding of the change in levels from both sides of the wall.

During construction, it is anticipated that pedestrians will be diverted into a safe route on the carriageway in accordance with the "Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice" by the Department for Transport. This has been discussed in writing with the Kirklees Streetworks team. The temporary pedestrian walkway is to be 1.2m wide where possible (1m min) and the remaining carriageway space is to be a minimum of 3m.

6. Heritage Statement

The rebuilding of the wall is essential and the heritage impact of the rebuilding is considered to be negligible. The vast majority of the re-build will use reclaimed original materials from the collapse.

The proposed reduction of the height of the wall is considered to have a positive heritage impact, allowing greater appreciation of the motte from Church Lane. The copings will be reinstated, with new stone copings to match in shape and tooling only where there is insufficient salvage.

The recent surveys by architect and engineer have established a far less intrusive proposal than had previously been anticipated. Soon after the collapse of the wall, the installation of a new concrete retaining wall was under consideration. The impact and cost of that proposal set back the project and hence the wall remains in a collapsed state over a decade later. By keeping and repairing the existing retaining wall, with a new 'fence wall' built above, the impact upon the heritage is reduced significantly and the costs will be considerably less than a new engineering solution.

The proposals now have no impact upon the archaeology as no below ground works are proposed. The repair works are confined to the 'modern walls' surrounding the monument, excluded from the scheduled ancient monument. The ground beneath the walls, which is included in the scheduling, will remain in place undisturbed.

