St Saviour

Location

The church of St Saviour stands on the east side of Magdalen Street, immediately north of St Saviour’s Lane. Until the 1970s it was located south of a major fork in the road (known as Stump Cross) where Magdalen Street was met by Botolph Street. Kirkpatrick, writing in the 1720s, stated that ‘Upon the void ground lying between the Channels of these two Streets stood the Cross, wch on occasion of its having been broken … was called Stump Cross’ (Hudson 1889, 83). Much of Botolph Street was removed with the construction of Anglia Square and the flyover for the Inner Ring Road, although the relict northern arm of the street still exists beyond Anglia Square, running northward to effect a junction with St Augustine’s Street.

Kirkpatrick also noted that, south of the location of the Cross, the ‘united Street runs S. (contracting by degrees) past the west end of St Saviour’s churchyard’. This contraction, less evident at the present day, is very obvious on the First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1883. Indeed, the street hereabouts has a triangular form which, together with documented references and place-name evidence to the Cross, suggests the possible location of a market place (Ayers 2011, 78). Currently there is no known documentary or archaeological evidence of such a market which lack would argue that, should it have existed, it was of early date. It can also be noted that the area was located centrally within a D-shaped fortified enclosure constructed at the end of the 9th or beginning of the 10th century so a market here is not improbable. The earliest known reference to the church - as (Ecclesia) sancti Salvatoris - is dated between 1186 and 1200 (Sandred and Lindström 1989, 52). The medieval building probably had an anchorhold because Blomefield records an anchoress named Sabine at St Saviour’s but at an unspecified date (Blomefield 1806, 444). No above ground trace of this feature is evident.

The parish of St Saviour incorporated the parishes of St Botolph and St Mary Unbrent in the 16th century. The extent of the original St Saviour’s parish is therefore unknown although the Enrolled Deeds suggest that, in the early 14th century, its southern boundary was only some four tenements south of St Saviour’s Lane; it extended as far east as Rotten Row (now Peacock Street). It is likely that a more detailed appraisal of the bounds of the parish could be achieved by a thorough study of the various deeds.
There was very limited archaeological investigation of the church when it was being converted to a Christian youth centre in 1996. Watching-brief observation immediately outside the porch revealed only re-deposited human bone while no archaeological deposits were observed when the pew platforms were removed. Stanchion holes excavated within the chancel suggested that the deposits here had been removed up to a depth of 2m for the insertion of brick vaults for the Beevor family in the 18th century. Further brick vaults were observed beneath the northern vestry (Norfolk Historic Environment Record).

Bibliography


Norfolk Historic Environment Record:  http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF597-St-Saviour's-Church-Magdalen-Street-Norwich&Index=2&RecordCount=2&SessionID=1fbca5f3-6189-4b24-9f50-c15d9eee6123#sthash.tdBte05R.dpuf