

Dorset County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: West Knighton, West Dorset	National Grid Reference: SY 7324 8762	Number:
Subject: Archaeological recording at St Peter's, West Knighton, Dorset.		Photo attached: Y
Planning Application no: DAC Faculty 2033	Recipient museum: n/a	
OASIS ID: oakfordal-112998	Museum Accession no: n/a	
Contractor's reference number/code: OA1022	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 24-10-2011	
<p>Description of works: The Church of St Peter (Fig. 1) is located in West Knighton, Dorset. The village is first mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 when it is held by William of Ecousis. The church is Grade I listed and contains fabric of late 12th century date. The church was heavily altered during the 13th century, when the chancel was rebuilt, the nave lengthened and a tower added. The arcade for the south aisle, originally of four bays, was also built at this time. During the 16th century the east end of the aisle was widened to form the south chapel. The south aisle was partly demolished, and the arcade filled in during the 18th century. Extensive repairs were carried out in 1831 and in 1893-4, the latter under the direction of Thomas Hardy.</p> <p>Archaeological recording (Fig. 2) was carried out following groundworks to install a new under-floor heating system</p> <p>Results: Groundworks inside the church, including the reduction in floor level in the nave and south chapel, were not monitored. Evidence was recovered for two floor levels, including the existing Victorian tiled floor. Prior to the works the floors consisted of a mixture of polychrome encaustic tiles and wooden floor boards laid in the 19th century. Below the make-up and bedding layer for the Victorian tiled floor was a thick layer of lime mortar floor make-up. Although no dating evidence was recovered it is possible that this floor is contemporary with the late 18th century memorial slabs uncovered in the nave and chapel. The stratigraphy across the interior was heavily disturbed, primarily by the insertion of 18th – 19th century brick vaults and the later alterations to the floor.</p> <p>Two grave slabs, a brick-lined vault and a large earth-cut grave were present in the nave. The earth-cut grave was sealed by an extensive undated layer of mortar floor make-up. A double width family vault (OA1022-5), located in front of the north porch, was constructed from red bricks bonded by a hard white lime mortar. The rectangular vault measured 2.65m x 2.05m externally, and 2.1m x 1.5m internally. There was no evidence of whitewash on the interior walls and the vault was constructed using an English bond for the side walls. The top of the vault is likely to have been removed during the 19th century when the new floor was laid. The vault was below the finished level required for the new heating system so it was not investigated further. It is worth noting that the term vault is slightly deceptive as in this case there is no vault and the actual burial is in a brick-lined grave.</p> <p>Two limestone ledgers were located along the northern edge of the nave. The northernmost slab (OA1022-1) was 1.71m x 0.94m x 0.1m, while the southern memorial (OA1022-2) was 1.68m x 0.9m x 0.09m. Both showed minimal surface wear and along their edges. Most of the damage would have resulted from the construction of small sleeper walls directly on top of the monuments in the late 19th century. It is unclear if the two ledgers in the nave are in their original position. Closer inspection showed that both ledgers were overlying a mixed rubble deposit. There was no evidence of an underlying vault or shaft grave and it is possible that they were moved in the 19th century. Inscriptions</p>		

indicate that the individuals (John Floyer d.1789, Jane Floyer d.1808, Mary Richards d.1804; and Anne Floyer d.1746, Mary Richards d.1758) all belonged to the Floyer and Richards families. A memorial plaque to members of these families is situated adjacent to the north porch.

Two further grave slabs, part of a large brick-lined barrel vault (OA1022-5) were uncovered in the south chapel. The vault, constructed from red bricks bonded by a hard white lime mortar, was located in the centre of the chapel and measured 1.8m x 1.5m externally. The barrel-vaulted roof was constructed from bricks laid as alternating header and stretcher courses bonded by a hard grey-white lime mortar, while slate spacers were used in between courses. The end wall at the east end extended outside the end of the vaulted roof. The bricks used in the construction were less uniform in size and finish than those used for the vault in the nave, suggesting an early to mid 18th century date for the construction of this vault. The vault had been extended at the west end by the addition of an additional brick-shaft grave covered by two re-used grave slabs.

The small slab (OA1022-4), measuring 0.95m x 0.45m, was made of limestone and had been bedded face down. No inscription was identified. The large slab (OA1022-3), measuring 1.95m x 1.05m, was made of purbeck marble, and although it contained a late 18th century inscription had quite clearly been re-used from an earlier monument. In the centre of the memorial were two indents (Fig. 3), containing a number of dowels set in lead plugs that would have held elaborate brasses. Dating to the second half of the 15th century, the memorial is likely to have been worked by specialist masons, termed marblers, in a London workshop. The shape of the upper indent suggests that the person represented was probably clergy, either a priest in mass vestments or in academic dress, dated c. 1460-80 (Martin Stuchfield *pers. comm.*). It would appear that the scroll is entirely separate from the effigy which is unusual. The lower indent is a lady in horned head-dress of a comparable date, i.e. c.1480 (Martin Stuchfield *pers. comm.*). It is unlikely that the lady commemorated was related to the male effigy (John Allan and Martin Stuchfield *pers. comm.*). There was no evidence (e.g. mortar or sockets on the underside) to suggest that the ledger had originally been part of a larger monument such as a table or altar tomb.

The later inscription on the slab mentions a single individual (John Hawkins d. 1799), while a memorial plaque, located on the east wall of the south chapel, mentions '*Also Mrs Grace Hawkins Died July 19th, Aged 87*'.

The memorial inscriptions:

The following inscriptions were recorded during the site visit. Only the ledgers that contained legible inscriptions are transcribed below.

OA1022-1

John Floyer Esq. of West
Stafford was buried December
ye. 6. 1789 Aged 45 years

Also Jane, Wife of Iohn Floyer Esq.
who died August 3rd. 1808 Aged 70

Mrs Mary Richards
1804, Aged 96

OA1022-2

Anne the Wife of Iohn
Floyer Esqr. of Upwey was
buried December 1746

Mary the Widow of Iames
Richards Esqr. of West
Knighton was buried November
1758

OA1022-3

John Hawkins M,D
Died Feby, 22d: 1799,
Aged 77

Recorder:

MFR Steinmetzer (Oxford Archaeology)

Date sent to HER:



Fig. 1 Location of site

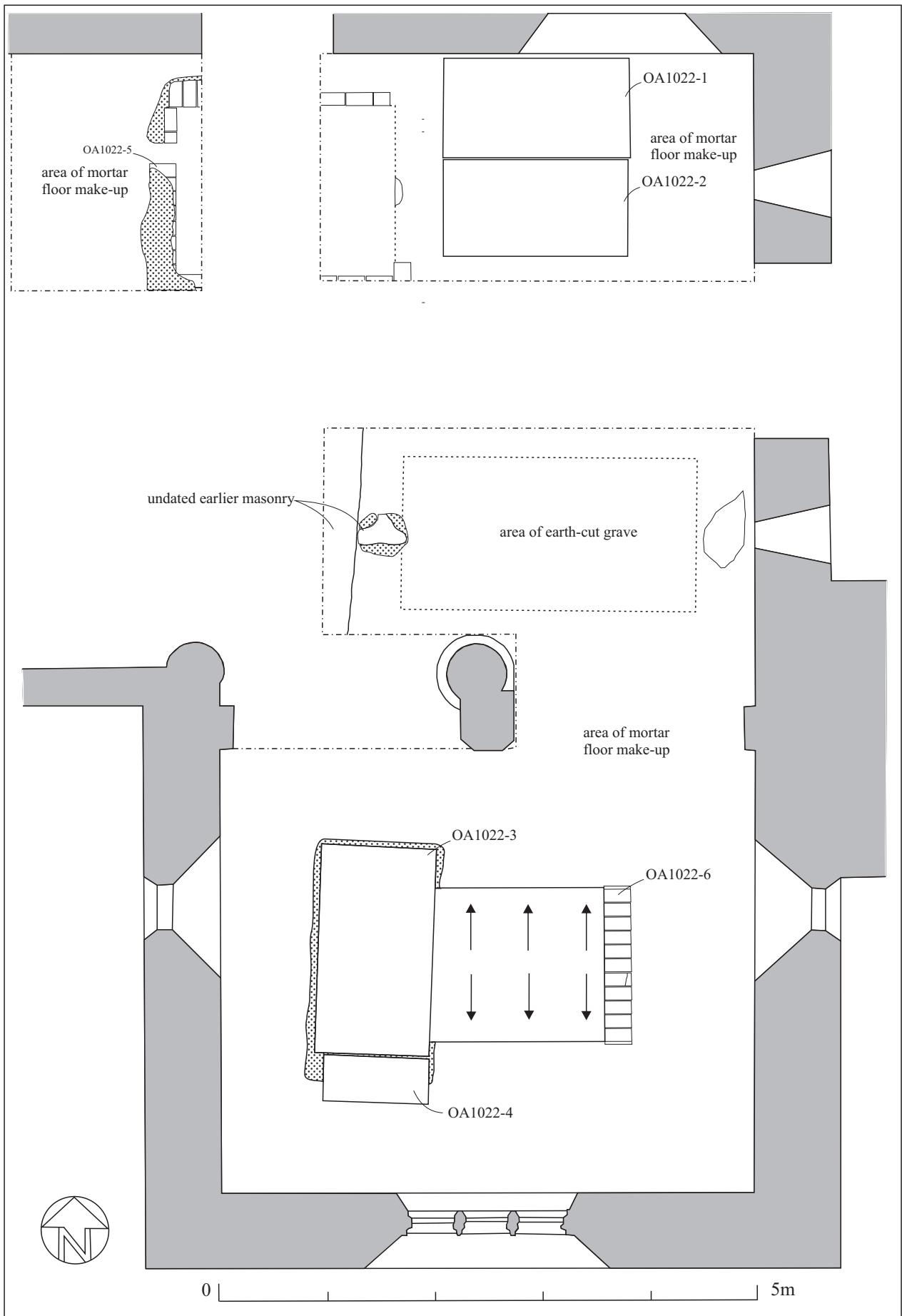


Fig. 2 Plan of groundworks showing location of observations.

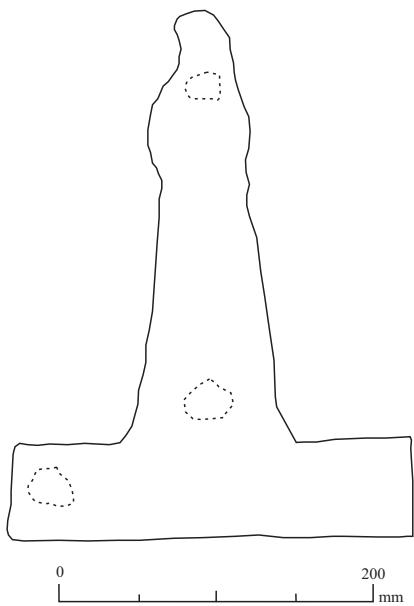
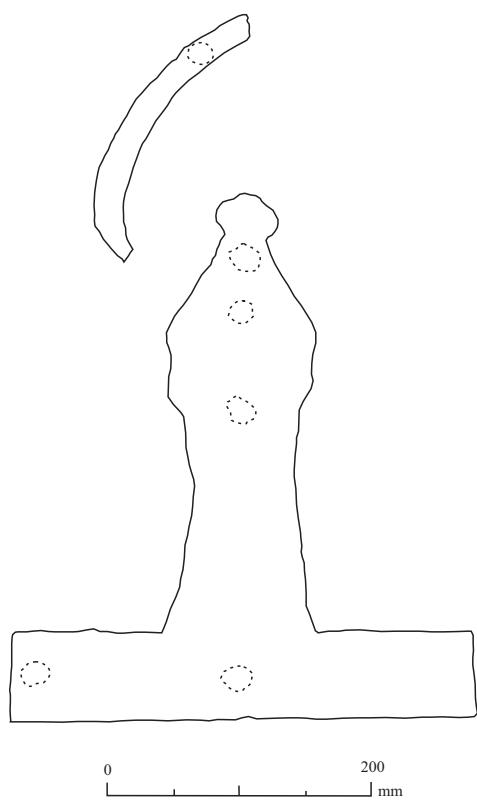
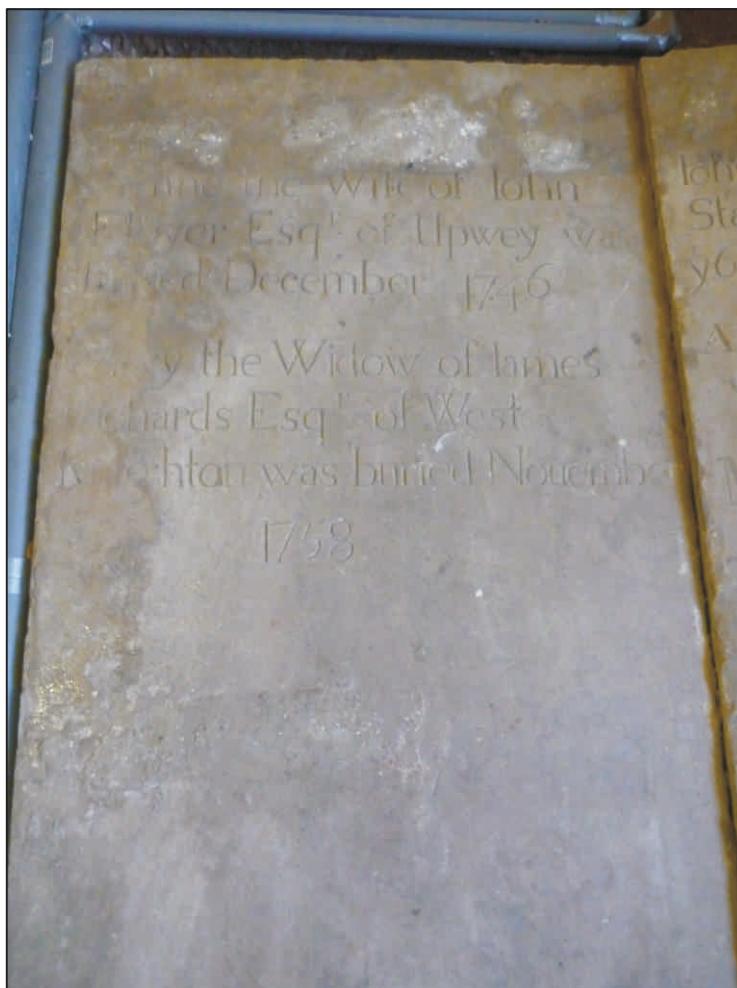


Fig. 3 15th brass century indents showing location of lead plugs, St Peter's, West Knighton. Not to scale.



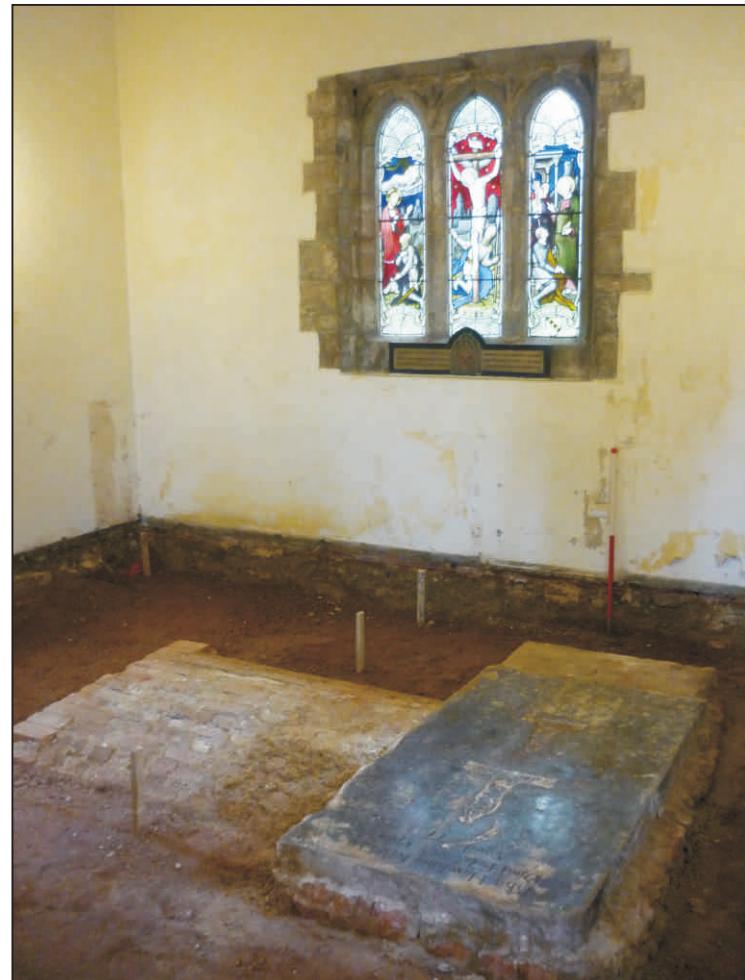
Pl. 1 Close-up view of memorial slab OA1022-1.
Looking west.



Pl. 2 Close-up view of memorial slab OA1022-2.
Looking west.



Pl. 3 General view of brick vault OA1022-5 and memorial slabs OA1022-1 and OA1022-2 in background. 0.25m and 1m scale. Looking east.



Pl. 4 General view of brick vault OA1022-6 and re-used memorial slabs OA1022-3 and OA1022-4. 1m scale. Looking southeast.



Pl. 5 Close-up view of lost 15th century brass on memorial slab OA1022-3. 0.25m scale. Looking north.



Pl. 6 Close-up view of lost 15th century brass on memorial slab OA1022-3. 0.25m scale. Looking north.



Pl. 7 Close-up view of later inscription on memorial slab OA1022-3. 0.25m scale. Looking north.



Pl. 8 General view of brick vault OA1022-6. 0.25m and 1m scale. Looking west.



Pl. 9 General view of earth-cut grave with *in situ* masonry in foreground. 1m scales. Looking east.