



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**An archaeological evaluation for the extension of the
churchyard of St John the Baptist Church, Thorpe
Mandeville, Northamptonshire**

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Thorpe Mandeville churchyard extension

An archaeological evaluation for the extension of the churchyard of St John the Baptist Church, Thorpe Mandeville, Northamptonshire

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Summary

A total of 30m of evaluation trenches showed that an area of c350 sq m north-west of St John the Baptist Church, Thorpe Mandeville, and being adopted for an extension to the existing churchyard, contains no significant archaeology.

Introduction

Planning consent had been granted to Thorpe Mandeville Parochial Church Council for the enlargement of their existing churchyard, north-westwards into adjacent private land which is currently pasture. The new plot to be created measured c22m East-west by c16m north-south, some 352 sq m.

An archaeological condition was applied to the permission in order to ascertain and then address, any outstanding archaeological issues regarding the site, which lies close to one of the focal settlement sites in the village, the parish church of St John the Baptist. Guidance on trench-lengths and locations for trenches had been provided in association with the County Archaeological Advisor, Lesley-Ann Mather, who monitored the works on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.

The churchyard of St John the Baptist, Thorpe Mandeville, lies all around the medieval church at around 168m above Ordnance Datum, at NGR: SP 5320 4498 (Fig 1). To the west and north of the churchyard boundary lie areas in which earthworks have been recorded which are believed to be the remnants of Elizabethan gardens laid out as part of the precursor to the nearby Manor House (RCHME 1982, 146 & fig 111). The churchyard boundary in its entire circuit comprises roughly-squared and rough-coursed limestone, capped with cement flaunching.

Partida, Hall and Foard (2013, Maps 72m and 72EM) show the site but without interpretative detail.

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Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2016

Further ephemeral earthworks within the churchyard and show how it has itself been previously extended to both the north and the west to its current shape and size. The new extension will fill in a gap and angle between these previous extensions.

One earthwork appeared to form a small mound at the south-eastern corner of the new extension, lying centred just within the existing churchyard. A lone pine tree grows from this mound, the northern tail of which extends into the evaluation area.

Thorpe Mandeville parish also contains evidence for prehistoric and Roman occupation, but it is the Elizabethan manor garden layout which dominates the historic backdrop to the existing churchyard.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out on 30 March 2016 in fine weather and dry ground conditions, after a little seasonal rain. The work was carried out in accordance with an archaeological brief issued by the County Archaeological Advisor of Northamptonshire County Council and an approved Written Scheme of Investigation issued by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd and dated 23 February 2016.

The work comprised six 5m-long trenches laid out as prescribed by the County Archaeological Advisor, and dug by a JCB-type 180-degree excavator. It was fitted with a 1.6m-wide toothless ditching bucket working under archaeological control (Fig 2).

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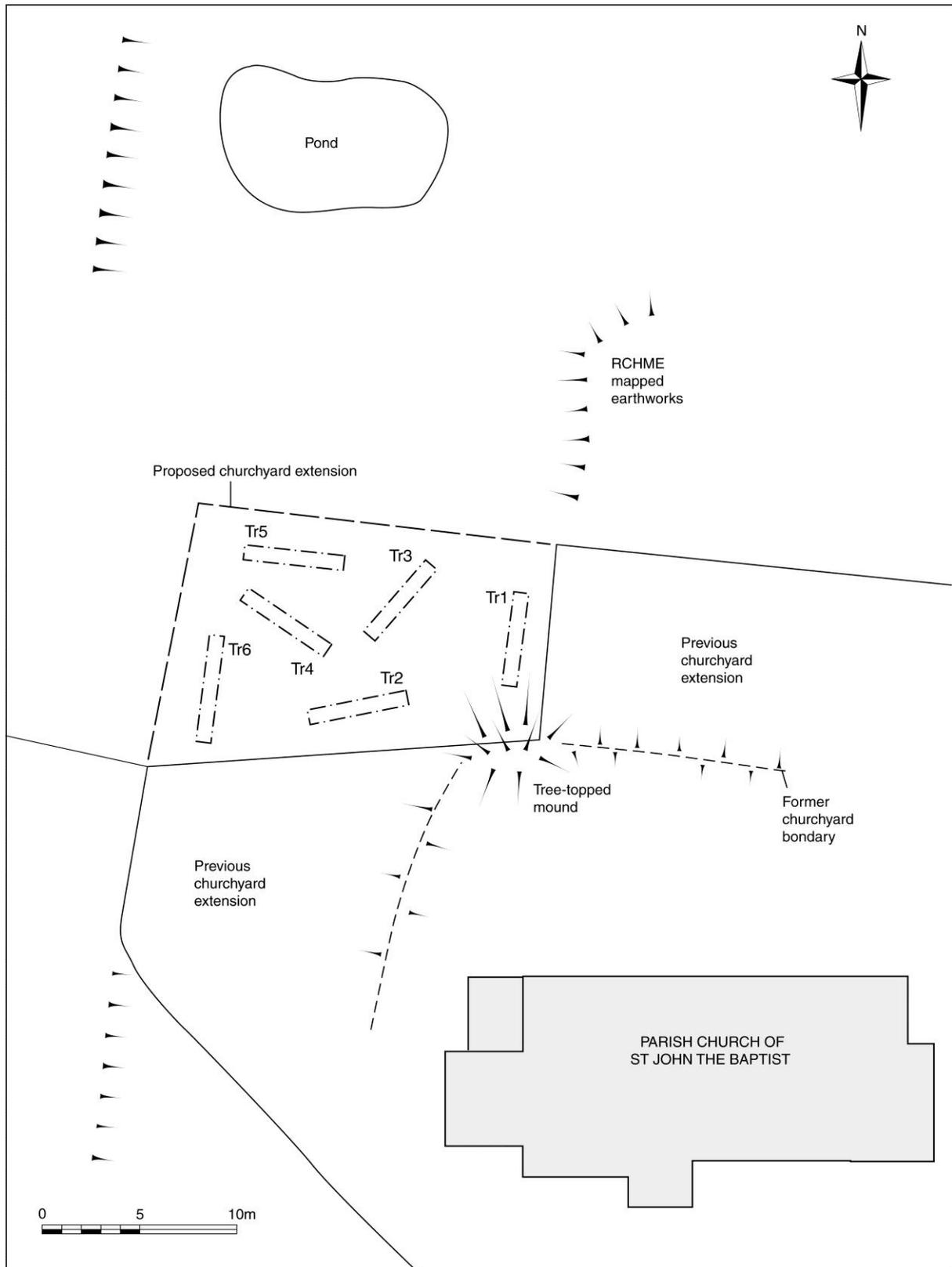


Fig 2: The trench layout (Andy Isham)

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Results

In each trench the turf overlay a 300 to 400mm-thick, loamy topsoil, with a mat of roots extending across much of the site, many relating to a recently-felled ash tree (Jeremy Greenhalgh, pers comm). Below this was a thin (c100mm at most) orange sandy clay subsoil, into which had been pressed hundreds of fragments of limestone in various degrees of density and size, but which were present to some degree in each trench. These included one or two bigger, squared blocks.

On removal of the subsoil and stone, each trench was bottomed onto natural orange sandy clay.

Only Trench 1 differed from the rest, and then only slightly. At its south end the limestone rubble thickened markedly to a thickness of some 400mm and formed the base and structure of the mound noted as an earthwork both inside and outside the existing churchyard (Figs 2 and 3). Tree roots had a strong hold on this deposit, over which the current topsoil had either accumulated or been deposited. Within the trench, this simple build-up of deposits amounted to 700mm in all, almost twice that in all the other trenches.

The results in all the other trenches were remarkably homogenous (Fig 4).

There were no finds of any sort.



Fig 3: Trench 1, looking South, with the rubble-strewn ground rising to the tree-topped mound; scale 2m



Fig 4: Trench 4, looking East, as representative of all the other trenches; scale 2m

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Conclusions

None of the trenches contained significant archaeology (Figs 3, 4, 5 & 6). No dating evidence was present.

The small mound within the churchyard appears to simply be the result of dumping of stone-rubble during works on the church or the churchyard boundaries. The self-seeding or planting of a pine tree on this mound has helped preserve it, but it is not felt to have any archaeological significance.

Beyond the mounded material, the widespread deposit of rubble at the base of the topsoil at its interface with the subsoil/natural geology is probably a result of many works on the church and churchyard. The RCHME shows a former, undated quarry about 150m to the north of the church while another one lies further out. Both are on the 1880 1st edition OS Map. This rubble spread may well represent the strewing of waste and spoil between the quarries and the stone's destination at the church (RCHME 1982, 146; fig 111).



Fig 5: View south-east across open, empty trenches



Fig 6: View west across open, empty trenches

Bibliography

RCHME 1982, *An inventory of the historical monuments in the county of Northampton, IV: Archaeological sites in south west Northamptonshire*, 145-8.

Partida T, Hall D, and Foard G, 2013, *An atlas of Northamptonshire: the medieval and early modern landscape*

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Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	Thorpe Mandeville churchyard extension
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-248638
Project Type	Evaluation
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	None
Current land use	Paddock
Development type	Extension of churchyard for burials
Reason for investigation	Planning condition
National grid reference	SP 5320 4498
Start/end dates of fieldwork	30 March 2016
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archive
Study area	c350 sq m



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

3 May 2016