

*A Watching Brief at
St Michael and All Angels Church,
Woolstaston,
Shropshire, 2011*

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Archaeology Service



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**A WATCHING BRIEF AT ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH,
WOOLSTASTON, SHROPSHIRE, 2011**

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A report for
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Photo 1: The study area, looking west

Photo 2: The cable trench, looking northwest (scale bars 1m & 0.5m)

Photo 3: The eastern end of the cable trench looking southeast (scale bar 0.5m)

SUMMARY

In September 2011 excavations were carried out for a new electricity supply to St Michael and All Angels Church, Woolstaston, Shropshire. The study area lay within the churchyard of the medieval church, and it was considered possible that archaeological remains might be encountered during the groundworks for the development. A watching brief on the groundworks was carried out by the Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council. No significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the course of the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Woolstaston is a small village situated in south Shropshire, about 15km south of Shrewsbury town centre. St Michael and All Angels Church (Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 13410) lies at the centre of the village (see Figure 1).

1.2 St Michael and All Angels Church is a late 12th or early 13th century structure, restored in 1864-6. It is built of un-coursed and roughly coursed grey and brown sandstone rubble with grey sandstone ashlar dressings, with a sandstone slate roof. The church is a Grade II* listed building (No. 259646).

1.3 In September 2011 excavations were carried out for a new electricity supply to St Michael and All Angels Church as part of a larger project renewing the supply within Woolstaston. The excavation trench ran through the historic churchyard of St Michael and All Angels Church and it was considered that there was a possibility that archaeological remains might be encountered during the groundworks.

1.4 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it was considered necessary that the groundworks for the new electricity supply be accompanied by the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in the form of an archaeological watching brief.

1.5 The aim of the watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the groundworks.

1.6 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned by Central Networks to carry out this programme of archaeological work in accordance with a scheme of investigation approved by the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council.

2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 The foundation trenches for the current development were excavated by hand under archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.6m and a width of 0.25m. The trench was excavated from the west side of the porch along the line of the path through the churchyard to the gateway at its southeast corner (Figure 2).

2.2 The natural subsoil consisted of an orange-brown to light brown silty sand (Figure 3; 4). The top of the natural sand lay at a depth of 0.4m below the existing ground surface. About 3m south of the porch a feature (Figures 2 & 3a; 6) was seen cut into the natural sand. The fill (5) was cleaned slightly to reveal the top of a skull. As the skull lay beneath the required finished level for the cable duct, it was re-covered and left *in situ*. The grave cut and natural were sealed beneath a deposit up to 0.3m thick of a light greyish brown sandy loam (2) with gravel and pebbles. A few single fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered from this deposit. These were bagged and reburied within the natural sand below the level of the new cable duct. The loam (2) lay beneath the existing gravel churchyard path (1) and the topsoil (3) on the southwest side of the porch.

2.3 At the point where the trench turned to run parallel to the southern boundary of the churchyard, a layer of cobbles (Figures 2 & 3b; 7) lay on the surface of the natural sand (4) at a depth of 0.36m below the ground surface. This may have represented a former path through the churchyard. It was sealed by the silty loam (2).

2.4 At the southeastern corner of the churchyard, the light brown natural sand (4) gave way to a natural yellowish brown sandy clay silt (8) and then a dark brown sandy silt with gravel (9).

2.5 No other significant archaeological features or deposits were seen during the watching brief.

3 REFERENCES

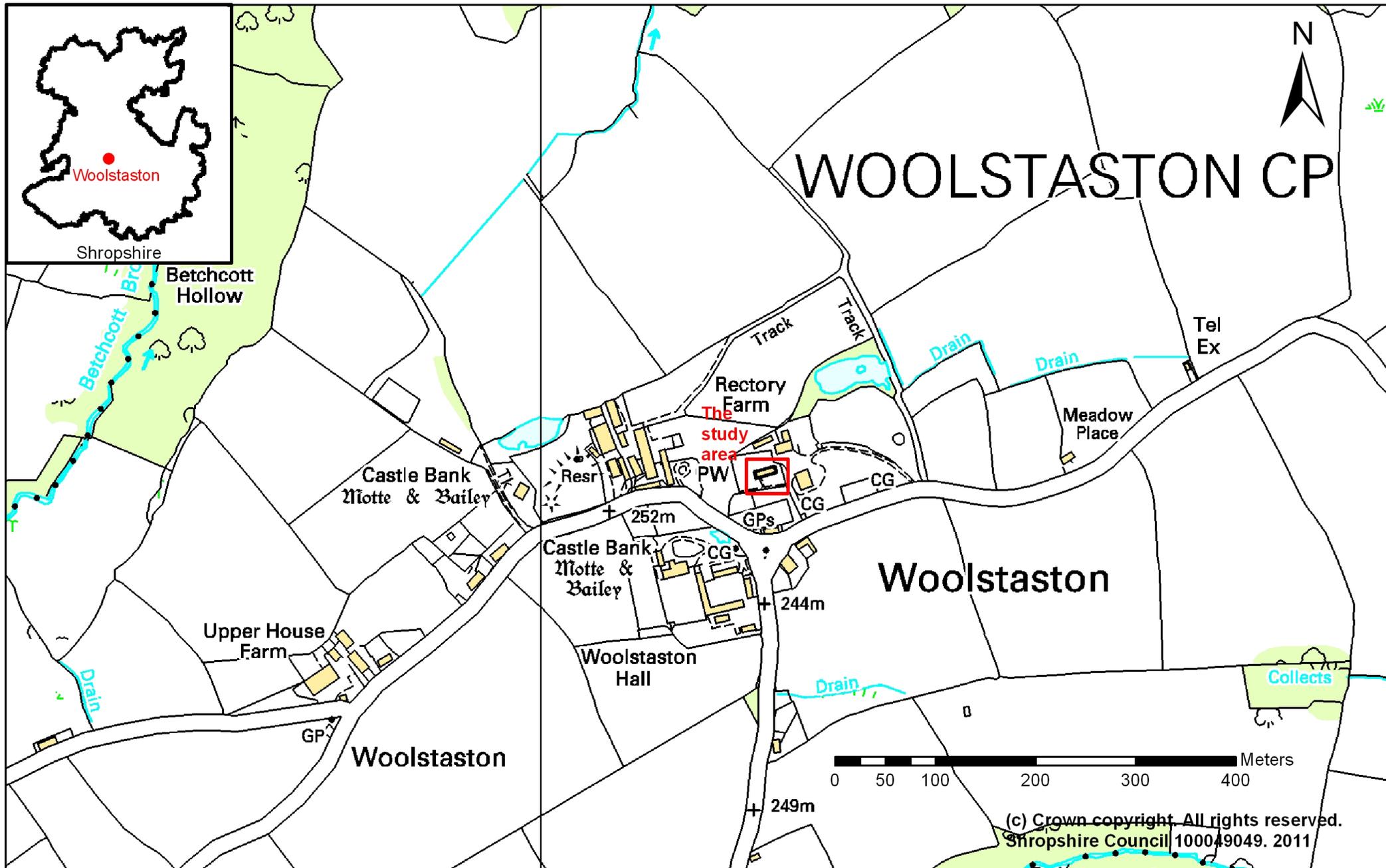
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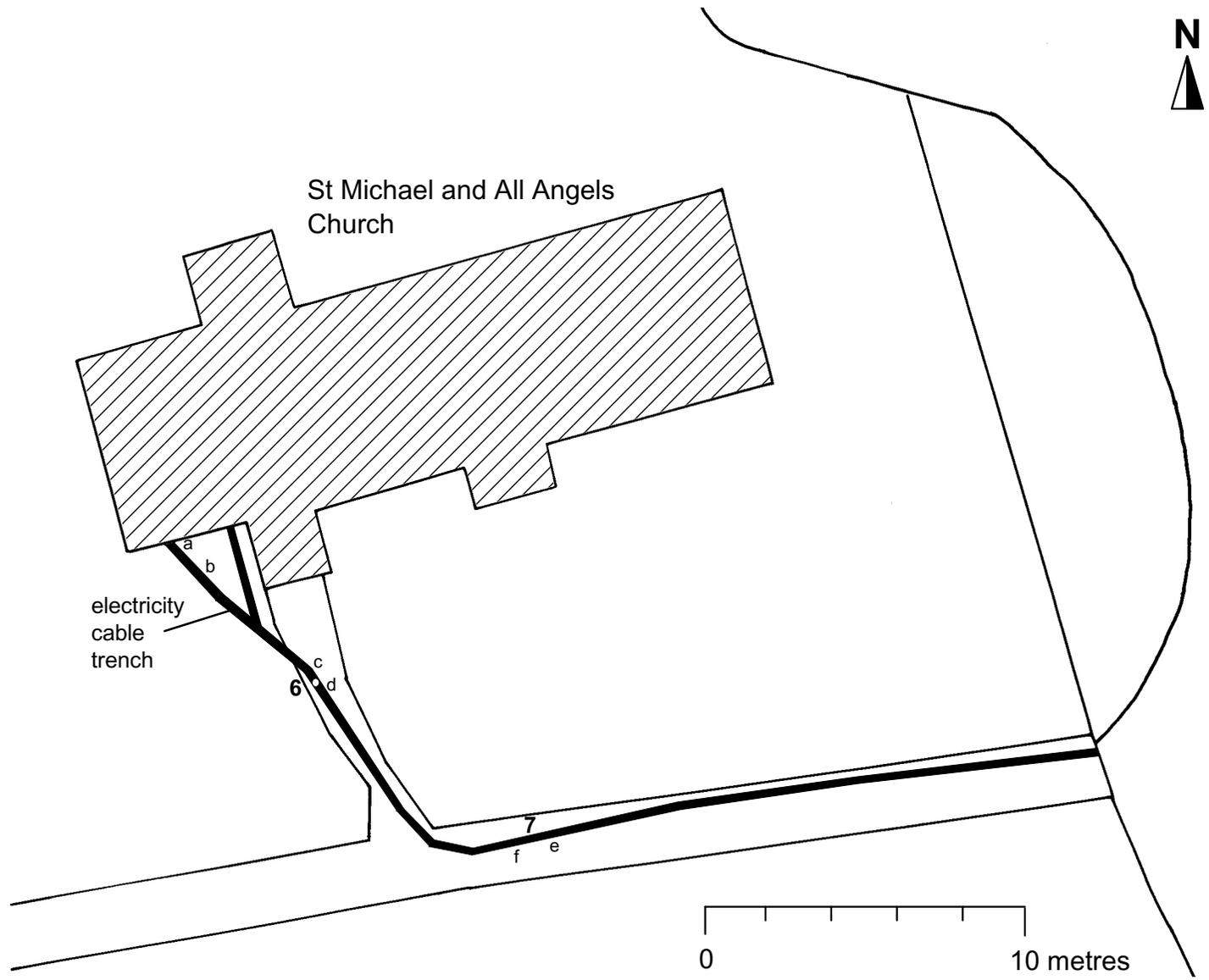
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ABBREVIATIONS

HER	Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council
OS	Ordnance Survey
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society
TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society

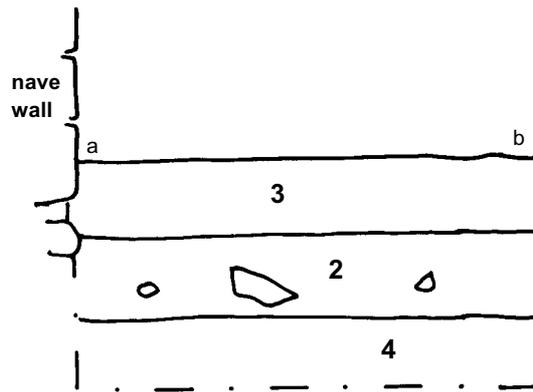




ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH, WOOLSTASTON, 2011

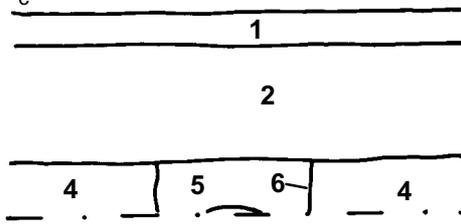
Figure 2: The study area, showing the location of the electricity cable trench; 1:200 scale

NW SE



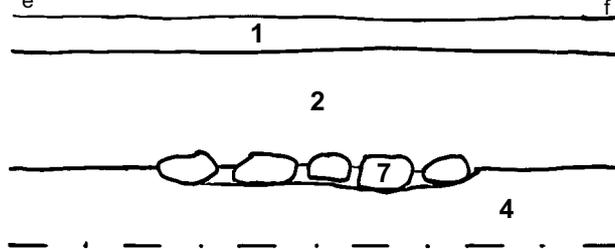
a)

N S

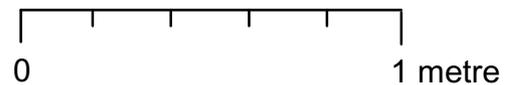


b)

E W



c)



ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH, WOOLSTASTON, 2011

Figure 3: The cable trench; a) southwest-facing section at the north end of the trench; b) west facing section showing grave-cut 6; c) north-facing section showing surface 7; (for locations see Fig.2, a-b, c-d, & e-f); 1:20 scale



Photo 1: The study area, looking west



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Photo 3: The eastern end of the cable trench looking southeast (scale bar 0.5m)