

# St John the Baptist Church, Wasperton, Warwickshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief



*understanding heritage matters*

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1472  
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*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** St John The Baptist Church  
**Commissioned by:** Mr Carl Smith (on behalf of PCC)  
**Project Report No.** 1472  
**Site Code:** WJ14  
**Planning Reference:** n/a  
**National Grid Reference:** SP 2657 5877  
**Staff:**  
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## SUMMARY

Archaeological observation during work at St John the Baptist Church, Wasperton revealed no evidence for clearly defined medieval remains, although a single tile fragment is probably derived from a floor of this period. A masonry foundation or footing was revealed and is probably associated with the nave wall. A large fragment of millstone grit in the foundation may have been part of an Iron Age quern rough-out.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Permission has been granted by the Diocese of Coventry for work to be undertaken on new supports for part of the floor in St John the Baptist's Church, Wasperton. The proposed work lies in an area of archaeological potential and may also have revealed fabric or other remains associated with the 18th-century church (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 2203) or associated with the original medieval church (MWA 5250). A recommendation of the Diocesan Advisor therefore required the parochial church council to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the work.

1.2 A recommendation for the archaeological work has been made by the archaeological advisor to the Diocesan Advisory Committee. A programme of works comprising of a watching brief during the course of required groundworks was recommended.

1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire have produced a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological work, including observation and recording and were commissioned to undertake archaeological fieldwork. This was carried out in June 2014. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under site code WJ14.

## 2 LOCATION

2.1 The site is located in the village of Wasperton and St John the Baptist's Church lies in the southern part of the settlement. The site is centred on the national grid reference SP 2658 5877 in the parish of Wasperton. The development site is occupied by St John the Baptist's Church and churchyard with hard standing and grassed areas.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is First Terrace River Deposits ((British Geological Survey 1974).

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The possible extent of the medieval settlement of Wasperton has been determined through medieval ridge and furrow seen on aerial photographs and looking at property boundaries on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 (MWA 9137). The manor of Wasperton is mentioned in the Domesday Survey (1086) when it was owned by Coventry Priory. It remained in the possession of the priory, apart from a brief period in the early 13th century, until the Dissolution when it passed to the Walter family (VCH 1949, 188).

3.2 The parish church of St John the Baptist (MWA 2203) was entirely rebuilt in a 14th-century style in 1843 by Sir Gilbert Scott. An illustration of the old medieval church, of about 1820 (VCH 1949, plate facing 186), shows a building with a small nave and chancel (MWA 5250). Although apparently medieval, the old building had clearly been modernised in the 18th century when three large Georgian windows were added to the nave. The church was the chapel attached to the parish of Hampton Lucy throughout the medieval period.

Listed Building entry details the following:

18/347 Church of St JohnThe Baptist 11.4.67

GV II

Parish church. 1843 by Sir G G Scott, adapted from church of 1736. Red sandstone with plain tile roofs. The chancel, south aisle, bell-turret, and all the windows are by Scott. Early English/Decorated style. Comprising nave, chancel, south aisle, south vestry and north porch. Octagonal lead-clad timber bell-turret over west end with short spire. C19 timber-framed north porch containing early C16 glass. Decorated style traceried windows. Interior: Early English style three-bay south arcade. Crown-post nave and aisle roofs with crenellated tie-beams. Angel corbels in chancel. Screen by Scott dated 1845 in circa 1300 style. Pulpit of circa 1600. Communion rail of early C18 in wrought iron. East window by Hardman to designs of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin.

3.3 Several maps exist of Wasperton, including a 1686 estate map (WRO Z187 U) and an Inclosure map of 1838. This gives a representation of the manor house, with surrounding outbuildings and the church, although it is not an accurate plan. The 1831 Ordnance Survey map shows a small-scale plot of the village and shows a large building, perhaps a barn, on the opposite side of the entrance to the house from 'The Granary'. This building is also shown on the Inclosure map of 1838 (CR 569/256), but had disappeared by the time of the 1887 Ordnance Survey map.

## 4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination.

4.2 The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.

4.3 An experienced archaeologist was made available for relevant ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with the recommendation.

## 5 WATCHING BRIEF

### **Ground reduction**

5.1 The wooden pews and floor were lifted in an area measuring 6.2m x 2.2m in the northern part of the nave. A depth of approximately 0.2m of deposits was removed prior to the visit by an archaeologist. This included the existing tile floor (1), a levelling deposit (2) and underlying mortar (3).

### **Pad pits**

5.2 In total eight small pits (1-8) were observed and these were all hand dug to a depth of approximately 0.3m. The pits were slightly irregular in size, but averaged 0.4m long and 0.3m wide, and were excavated to a depth of between 0.28m and 0.38m. The pits were located in two rows parallel with the nave wall.

### **Deposit sequence**

5.3 Geological natural was not clearly observed in the base of all the pits, but a deposit of loose sandy gravel (5) was reached at a depth of approximately 0.34m in most cases. This is most likely to be part of the geological sequence.

5.4 The gravel deposit was overlaid by a layer of light grey brown sandy loam containing fragments of tile, brick and stone. These included several tile fragments, one possible green glazed medieval tile, a fragment similar to those forming the existing floor and one tile of a smaller size. The layer was an average of 0.25m thick and appeared to extend over the majority of the area of investigation.

5.5 Pits close to the wall contained a close-packed stone foundation (6). The pits did not provide sufficient area to reveal the character of the masonry, which extended along most of the length of the area of investigation. No masonry was revealed within pit 5, which contained a sequence similar to pits (1-4).

5.6 The upper sequence of deposits (1, 2 and 3) appeared to be related to the existing church floor.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The watching brief did not record the full extent of any archaeological remains or features as the nature of the pits probably precluded this. Masonry for a foundation or footing along the north wall of the nave was revealed. The nature of this foundation was not revealed, but irregular stone blocks were encountered. It is most likely that this is associated with the existing north wall although there is a possibility that this was an earlier foundation, particularly as little evidence for it was encountered in the western-most pit (5).

6.2 The foundation included one large fragment of Derbyshire Millstone Grit, which was scorched along one face. It is unlikely that this would have come to Warwickshire as part of a glacial erratic (Jon Radley pers.comm.); Millstone Grit is, as its name suggests, commonly used for millstones, and quernstones and it is possible that this was part of a beehive quern rough-out. If this was the case it would be of Iron Age date.

6.3 Other pits revealed evidence of an extensive make-up or construction deposit containing brick, plaster and tile fragments. This appeared to be a 19th-century levelling or construction layer associated with the present church. However, a fragment of green-glazed medieval tile was recovered from this deposit.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Mr Carl Smith for commissioning the work on behalf of the Wasperton PCC.

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## APPENDIX

### A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	Tiled floor	Existing floor
2	Layer	
3	Layer	
4	Light grey brown sandy loam	Construction deposit
5	Layer of gravel	Natural
6	Masonry foundation	?Foundation of north wall



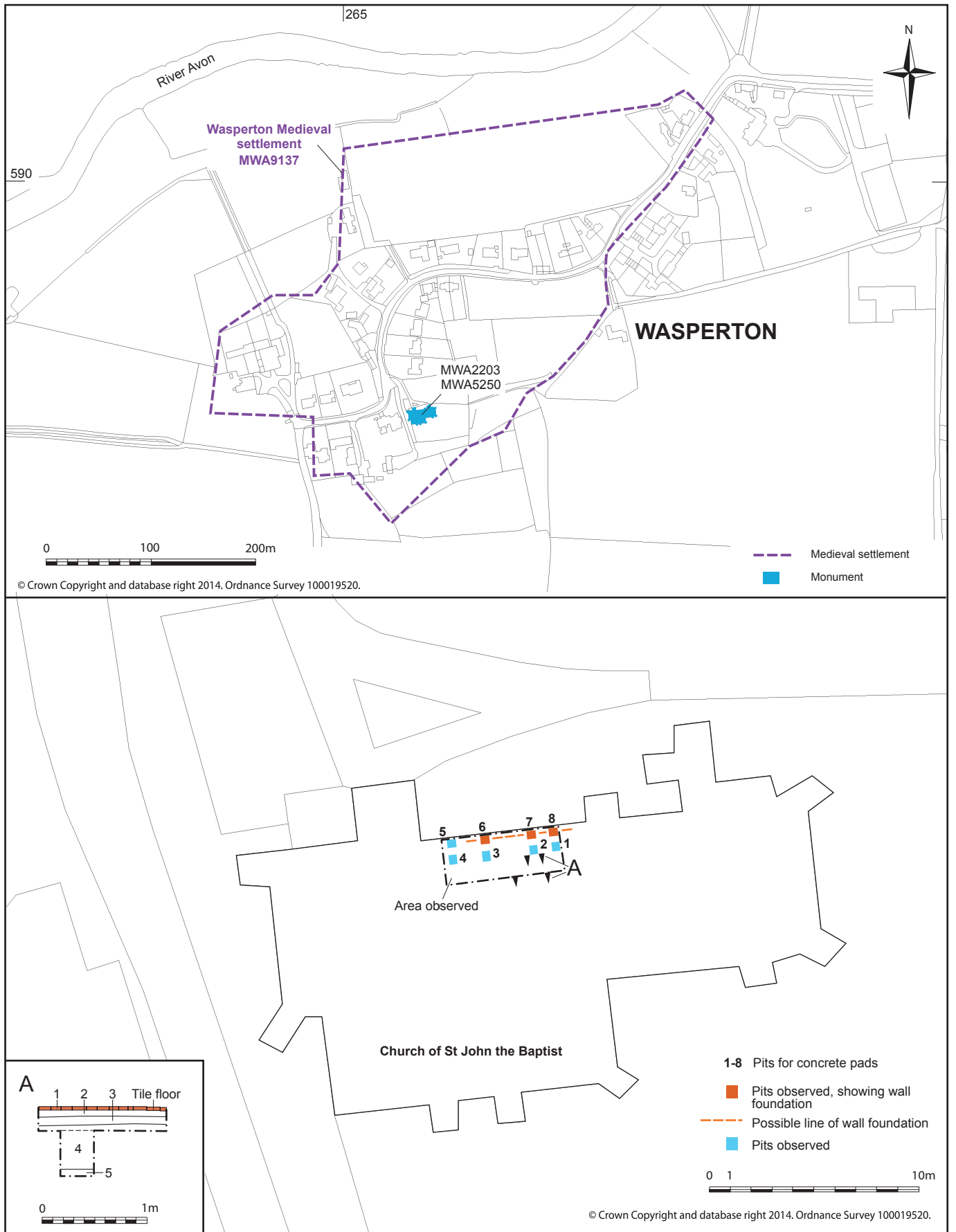


Fig 1: Site location and area observed with section A



Fig 2: View of area of investigation with excavation of pits



Fig 3: Pit 2