

**The Church of Christ, Wellington Heath,  
Herefordshire: An Archaeological Watching  
Brief.**



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**Herefordshire Archaeology** is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, maintains the county Historic Environment Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects.

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**Summary:**

*An archaeological watch brief was required in order to monitor the insertion of a drain into an existing drainage run and the excavation of two trenches to house a sewage treatment plant and a soakaway within the churchyard. The trenches for the soakaway and sewage treatment plant were located through the path in order to avoid any burials. No remains of archaeological significance were encountered.*

**Disclaimer:** It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. NGRs are accurate to approximately 10m. Measured dimensions are accurate to within 1m at a scale of 1:500, 0.1m at 1:50, and 0.02m at 1:20.

Figures contained within this report contain material from the Ordnance Survey. The grid in this material is the National Grid taken from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (OS Licence 100024168). This material has been reproduced in order to locate the site in its environs.

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## Introduction

This report (EHE 80349), provides an account of small scale watching brief carried out by Herefordshire Archaeology at Christ Church, Wellington Heath, Herefordshire (HER 4197).

The watching brief was required in order to record any remains of archaeological and historical importance revealed and / or disturbed by drainage works associated with the installation of a soakaway system.

Prior to works starting advice was given by Herefordshire Archaeology concerning the optimum location for the soakaway system in order to minimise the risk of disturbing burials.

The fieldwork comprised the recording by photographic record of the drainage run and observation of the excavation works where appropriate for the installation of a sewage treatment plant and soakaway

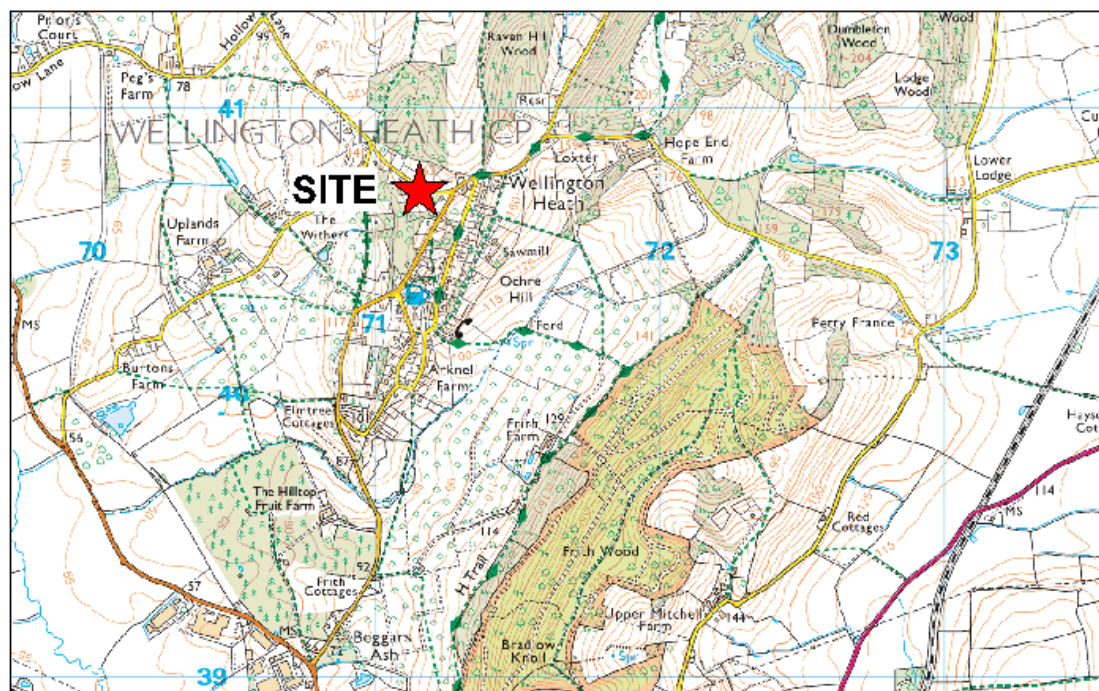


Figure 1: Site location of Christ Church in relation to the surrounding area.

The British Geological Survey list the underlying geology of Wellington Heath as Wenlock Rocks (undifferentiated) - Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 423 to 428 million years ago in the Silurian Period. (British Geological Survey website, Accessed 21-02-18; (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk>).

## Background History

Although there has been a settlement in Wellington Heath from the early Middle Ages there was no established church until the mid 19th century. Until then villagers had to walk to Ledbury or Coddington for any religious ceremonies.

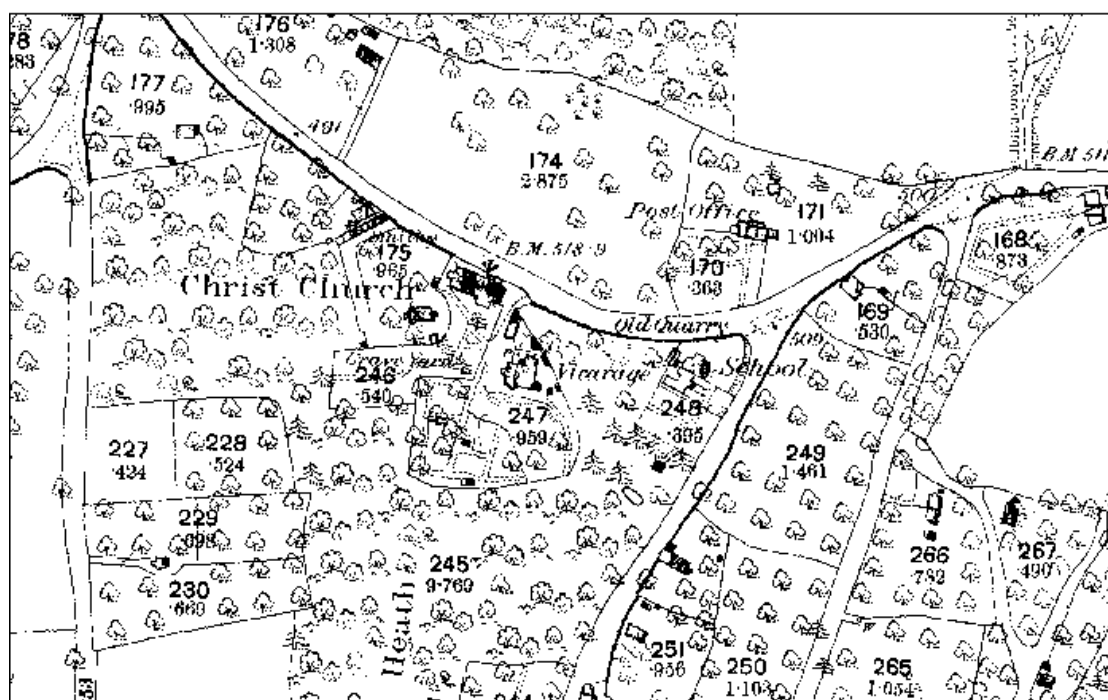


Figure 2: Extract from the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1887

In 1840, plans and specifications for the building of the new church were available to be viewed in the offices of solicitors, Messrs. J. and R. Higgins in Ledbury. Tenders were invited for the work, and the land was given by Thomas Heywood of Hope end, who also gave all the necessary funds for the building as well as the stone for construction.

### The Opening of the New Church – 15th July 1841

By 1841 the new church was completed; and was opened in July on a glorious bright and sunny morning. Indeed, the lovely weather held out until the whole ceremony was over, and then the heavens opened with torrential rain and thunder.

It is worth noting, that this was the first church to be consecrated in Herefordshire for over a hundred years.

The procession began at eleven, from Hope End, the house of Thomas Heywood; the Bishop was attended by thirty clergymen of his diocese, and a

large number of gentry and yeomanry along with many elegantly dressed ladies, added their weight to the proceedings.

The inhabitants of Wellington Heath said that they had never seen anything so grand.

The Rev. James Watts of Ledbury read the prayers, and the Bishop performed the service; the Very Reverend the Dean of St. Asaph preached the sermon, and it was declared to be the best and most appropriate ever heard, with the congregation listening with rapt attention. He strongly reprobated the Mormonite leaders "who endeavoured to persuade their followers that the New Jerusalem, mentioned in the Holy Writ, alluded to an earthly city, and urged the poorer part of his audience not to be led astray by such dangerous and ridiculous doctrines."

Afterwards, the congregation went out into the churchyard, where under a poplar tree the Reverend Prelate spoke the beautiful service to hallow the ground where people were to be buried.

Thanks were given to the architect, Mr. Matthews of Ledbury.

Christ Church was not exactly pretty in its early form, but gradually the building was enlarged and improved. Sadly, in May 1944 fire destroyed the roof and some of the interior, and it was not until the late 20th century that money became available to fund the building of a new church.

(<http://herefordshirepast.co.uk/churches/christ-church-wellington-heath/>)

## **Fieldwork**

The works were required in order to satisfy a planning condition and faculty placed upon the planning permission for the proposed installation of a seake treatment plant and soakaway within the graveyard. Site work took place on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

The works comprised the re-excavation of an existing drainage run from the north east corner of the church to carry new drains to a sewage tank and soakaway to be located in the churchyard to the south of the building.

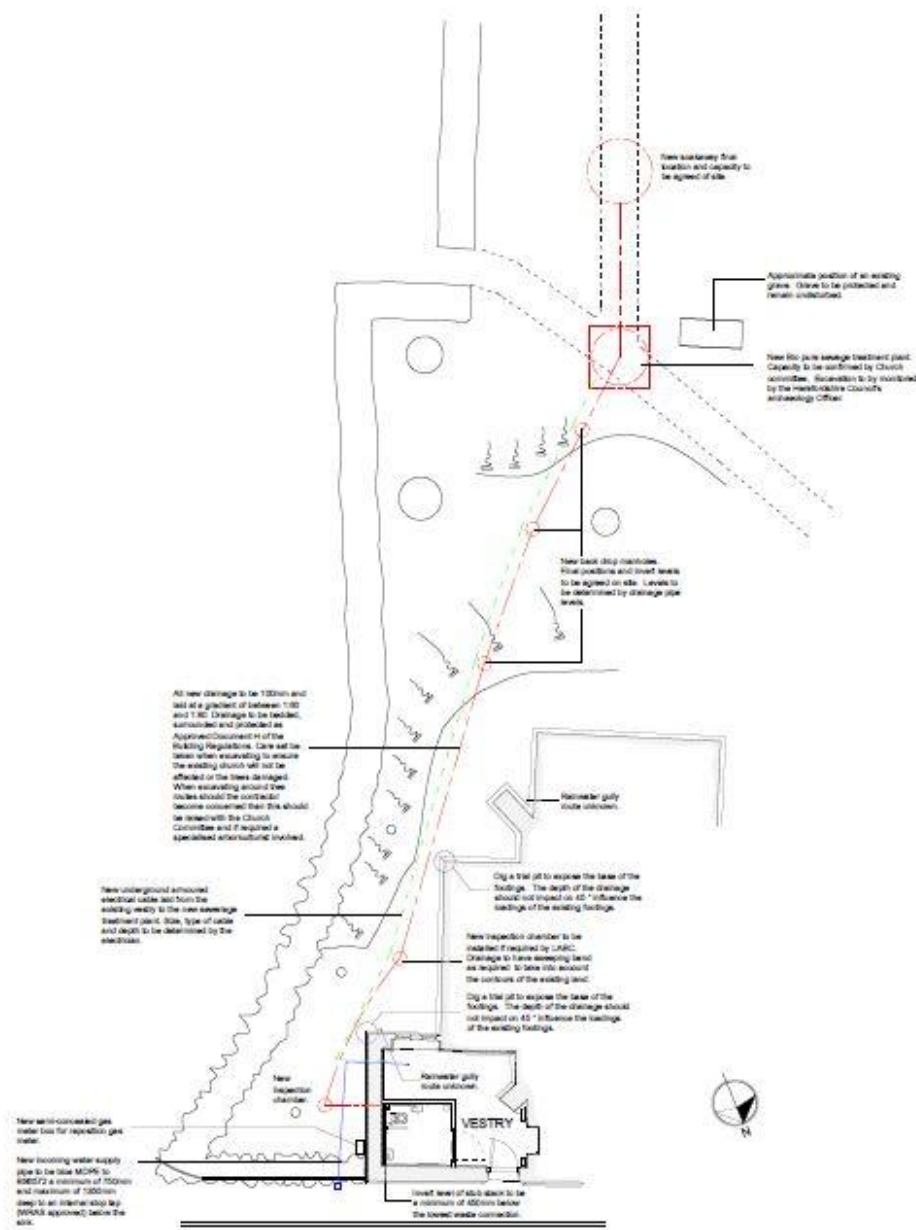
The majority of the excavation for the new pipes reused an existing drain run and did not cut deeper than the original pipe trench. The small sections that were new cut were not of sufficient depth to disturb burials. The drainage run excavations were monitored as they were within the known cemetery area and archaeological artefacts or human remains could have been encountered.

The excavation for the sewage tank and soakaway followed the line of the existing footpath so as to minimize the potential for finding burials or other archaeological artefacts. The excavation revealed that a thin layer of stone



(<0.10m deep) was located just below the surface that marked out the line of the churchyard path. Immediately below the stone layer the ground comprised of heavy red clay marl. The marl was continuous to the base of all the excavated areas including the excavations for the sewage tank and the soakaway.

No archaeological artefacts or human remains were present within any of the areas excavated and no deposits of archaeological interest were encountered.



PART EXTERNAL PLAN PROPOSED

Figure 3: Architects plan of proposed works. (© Clayton Architectural Drawing Services)



Plate 1: Drainage run looking north.





Plate 2: Drainage run looking south





Plate 3: trench for sewage treatment plant.



Plate 4: Trench for soakaway

## **Conclusions**

No features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological or historical significance were encountered during these works. This is largely due to the re-use of an existing drainage run together with the locations chosen for the soakaway and sewage treatment plant.

## **Site Archive**

20 digital photographs  
1 site notebook entry  
This document

## **Acknowledgements**

Herefordshire Archaeology would like to thank Andrew Thompson for his time and assistance.