

# Archaeological Observation and Recording Report

St Botolph's Church Aspley Guise Bedfordshire

Laura Dodd MSc March 2017



## **Quality Check**

Author	Author Laura Dodd MSc		252/AGC/2	Date	08/03/2017	
Editor	Ellen Shlasko PhD	Version	252/AGC/2	Date	27/04/2017	
Revision		Version		Date		

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## KDK Archaeology Ltd



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#### Summary

In February 2017, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Observation and Recording of St Botolph's Church, Aspley Guise, Bedfordshire during groundworks to improve drainage along the north elevation of the church.

The north aisle of the church was constructed in several phases starting in the medieval period, and has undergone extensive rebuilding, mostly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The original construction, as well as later rebuilding phases, was evident in the different construction methods observed in the exposed foundations. Trenches also revealed the remains of a 19<sup>th</sup> century boiler house adjacent to the church and an undated brick built crypt near the modern Chapter House. Although one of the trenches ran through the churchyard, only a single, disturbed burial was encountered during this exercise.

#### 1 Introduction

1.1 In February 2017, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Observation and Recording of St Botolph's Church, Aspley Guise, Bedfordshire. The project was commissioned by Priory Heritage Ltd, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Barclay Jones 2016) and approved by David Baker, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA) for the Diocese of St Albans.

#### 1.2 Planning Background

This project has been required under the terms of a Faculty granted by the Diocesan Advisory Committee of St Albans on the advice of their Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA), David Baker.

#### 1.3 The Site

Location & Description

The site is located in the administrative district of Central Bedfordshire, in the village and parish of Aspley Guise, and is situated at National Grid Reference (NGR) SP 9425 3625 (Fig. 1).

The development site is in the northern part of the village and is bounded to the north, east and south by private properties and to the west by Church Street (Fig. 2). The church and the surrounding churchyard are on a raised plateau above street level, at 109mAOD.

St Botolph's Church is a Grade II\* listed building (English Heritage Building ID 38117), and is described as follows:

Parish church. Medieval origins, extensively reworked early and later C19. Mainly coursed ironstone with ashlar dressings. Tower of coursed limestone rubble. Clay tile roofs to chancel and chapel. Slate roofs to nave and aisles. Chancel, N rector's vestry, N organ chamber and choir vestry, chapel, nave, N and S aisles, W porch/tower. Chancel: late C19, 3-light pointed-arched E window, 2-light pointed S window. N rector's vestry: late C19, with 2-light window and flat roofed C20 brick addition adjoining to N. N organ chamber/choir vestry: late C19 projecting gable, with flat-headed 4- light N window. S (Nativity) Chapel: late C19. 2-light pointed E window, 3- light square-headed S window, and 3-centred arched S doorway. Nave: C15, reworked C19. 4-bay N and S arcades, parts of N one original. Clerestories on both sides have 4 2-light square-headed windows. C19 embattled parapets. N aisle: E part (now N chapel)

is medieval, partly reworked C19. Slightly taller W part C19, probably 1855. W part has 3 square-headed 3-light windows. E part has 3-light square- headed window and 4-centred headed doorway surmounted by 2-light square-headed window. 3-light E window gives onto N organ chamber. Rose window to W. Embattled parapet. W porch/tower: C15, repaired C17, C18 and 1855. 3 stages, divided by string courses, with diagonal buttresses to W angles. C19 embattled parapet. Square-headed 2-light window to each side of bell-stage. S elevation has pointed-arched doorway surmounted by square-headed single light. W elevation has pointed-arched dooway. Interior: roofs mainly C19, except N aisle E end retains one original moulded king-post truss with figured corbels. N aisle has C15 traceried screen. C14 circular font with 4 moulded shafts forming corners. N aisle has tomb chest with effigy of knight, probably Sir William Tyrington, e1400. N aisle floor has brasses, one to John Danvers, rector, c1410, other c1500, probably to Sir John de Gyse IV. 2 polychrome marble wall monuments to N aisle N wall, to Francis Norcliffe, 1724, and William Wright 1807. Chancel N wall has brass, in simple marble strapwork surround, to William Stone, rector from 1583 to 1617.

E.M.R. Ditmas The Parish Church of St Botolph, Aspley Guise: A Short History 1970. (www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk)

#### Geology & Topography

The geology at the site consists of sandstone from the Woburn Sands Formation, with no noted overlying deposits (http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html).

#### Development

The development works were to re-lay and improve the original drainage along the north elevation of the church (Fig. 3).

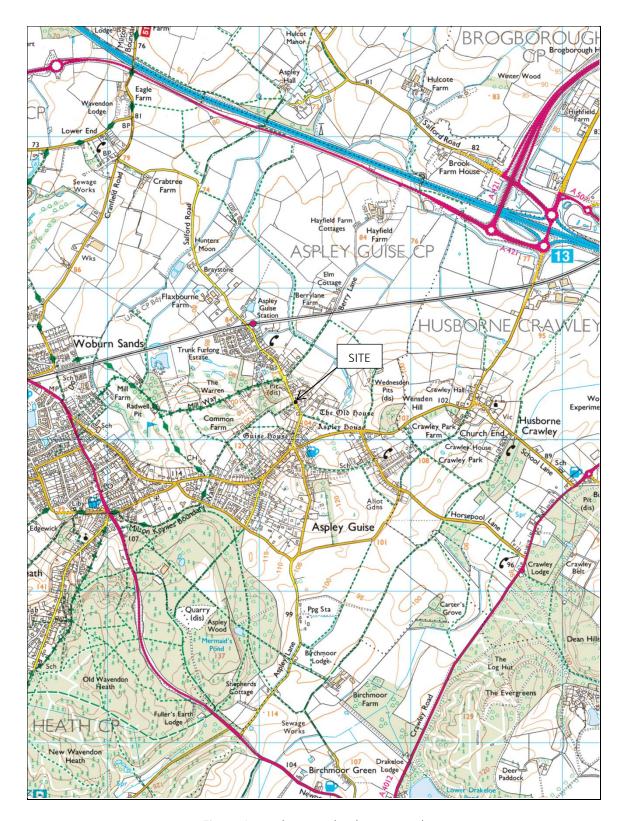


Figure 1: Site location (scale 1:25,000)

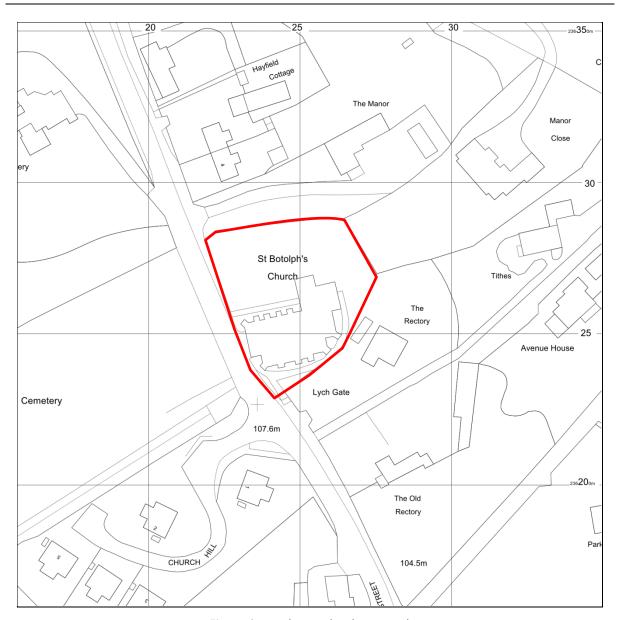


Figure 2: Site layout (scale 1:1250)

#### 2 Aims & Methods

- 2.1 The aims of this project as defined in the approved WSI (Barclay Jones 2016) were:
  - To establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation within the development area
  - To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape
  - To recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

#### 2.2 Methods

In line with the requirements of the brief, the methods used were as follows:

• All groundworks that were likely to have an impact on archaeological deposits were done under continuous and constant archaeological supervision.

#### 2.3 Standards

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The Specification and Schedule of Works
- The relevant sections of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance Notes* (CIfA 2014)
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct (CIfA 2014)
- Current English Heritage guidelines (HE 2015, EH 2008)
- The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (ALGAO 2003)

#### 3 Archaeological & Historical Background

The settlement of Aspley Guise (HER 16891) is Saxon in origin, being first mentioned in a document from 969AD, and was later developed as part of the Manor of *Aepslea*. It contains many buildings of historical and architectural interest, including a high proportion of listed buildings, and the settlement was designated in 1971 as the Aspley Guise Conservation Area (Mid-Beds District Council 2008).

Although it is thought that the dedication to St Botolph, a 7<sup>th</sup> century Saxon noble who became the patron saint of travellers, may indicate a pre-Conquest origin for the church (A Church Near You; St Botolph's; www.botolph.org.uk), it is generally considered to be medieval (EH Building ID 38117; HER 1007). The earliest documentary evidence for the church records the advowson as being in the hands of Simon de Beauchamp. He granted it in 1188 to Newnham Priory. In 1227, it was awarded to Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent (http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityArchives/AspleyGuise).

The church has undergone extensive restoration and repair since it was first built, but some parts of the older church remain, including a  $14^{th}$  century font and a  $15^{th}$  century traceried screen in the north aisle, along with the  $15^{th}$  century nave (although this has also been reworked). The north arcade and tower are both Perpendicular (Pevsner 2002: 43), but overall its architectural history is both complicated and uncertain; the west front of the tower has dates marking some of the restorations – 1665, 1765 and 1855 (Page 1912). Much of the church now dates to the  $19^{th}$  century, including the chancel, south aisle and chapel.

The church was mostly constructed from local ironstone, which helps to make it a focal point and landmark building in the village; the tower is of coursed limestone rubble (Mid-Beds District Council 2008).

#### 4 Results

#### 4.1 Introduction

As shown in Figure 3, the excavations consisted of a series of intersecting trenches positioned to allow placement of drainage pipes to carry water away from the church to a soakaway north of the building. Those placed against the exterior of the north aisle, set within the bays formed by the buttresses, are identified in the figure as 'Bay,' numbered from east to west. Three sections of trench followed the main pipe run, and are identified as 'Trench'. Trench 1 ran from the northwest corner of the Chapter House toward the soakaway to the northeast. Trench 2 was roughly parallel to the west wall of the Chapter House and Trench 3 was roughly parallel to the north aisle. Short trenches were also excavated connecting Bays 1, 3 and 4 with Trench 3. Both the bays and the trenches were approximately 0.50m wide, with larger areas opened when necessary to expose archaeological features and were excavated to a depth of approximately 0.60m, as specified in the drainage plan. In addition, a soakaway measuring 1.20x1.20m was excavated to a depth of 1.20m within the graveyard. All trenches were dug by hand under close archaeological. Surprisingly, only a single, disturbed burial was encountered during this exercise, although evidence for structures was observed.

The site stratigraphy was as follows:

- Topsoil (100) was a dark greyish brown slightly clayey sandy loam that was fairly friable. It contained occasional inclusions of sub-angular stones and frequent rooting. This layer was 0.09m deep. The topsoil was not present alongside the north aisle, where there is a modern gravel path.
- Cemetery soil (101) was mid-orangey brown slightly clayey sand. This was very friable and several collapses took place during the excavations. Occasional human bone, modern pottery and soft red brick were recovered but not retained for archiving purposes. The bricks were typical of the building material used in the building of the surrounding houses and brick tombs on the site. Roofing tiles were also observed. The nature of this context varied across the site as there were patches of redeposited natural sand or possibly builders' sand, particularly close to the northern aisle. This context reached a depth of 1.11m.
- The natural geology was not observed anywhere on the site.

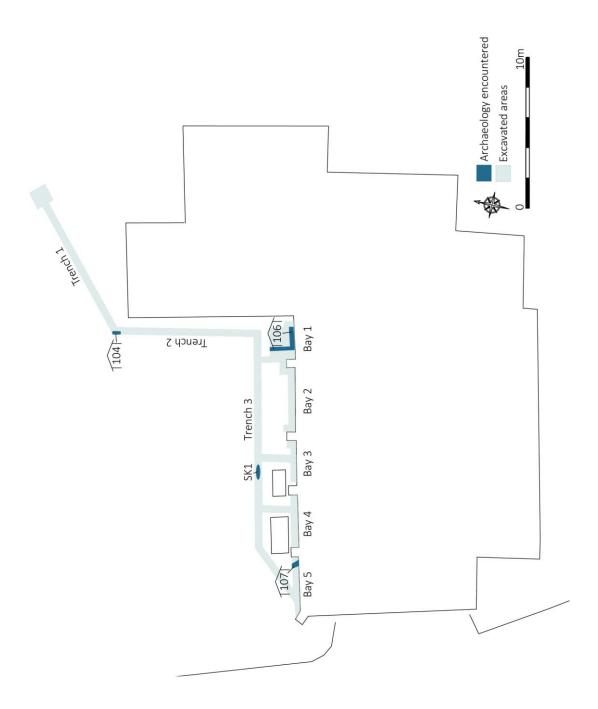


Figure 3: Plan of excavated area and features (scale 1:250)



#### 4.2 Description of features

#### Grave slab and boiler house (Bay 1)

Bay 1 was the easternmost bay, with its east end at the junction of the north aisle and the Chapter House (Fig. 4: Plate 1). Just below modern ground level, the excavation uncovered a large grave slab ( $1.86 \times 0.90 \text{m}$ ). In order to expose the slab, the trench was enlarged to be approximately  $2.5 \times 1.6 \text{m}$ .

The slab was dedicated to Miss Anna Hatherell and her sister, Miss Sophia Hatherell (Fig 4; Plates 1-5), and the inscription read:

TO THE MEMORY OF MISS ANNA HATHERELL WHO DIED MARCH THE 2<sup>ND</sup> 18\_\_ IN THE 79<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF LIFE

~.~

ALSO
TO THE MEMORY OF
MISS SOPHIA
SISTER OF ANNE HATHERELL
WHO DIED DECEMBER
AGED 76 YEARS

Sophia's will, dated 1839, is in the National Archives in Kew (PROB 11/1909/263).

A brick built feature (106) was visible beneath the slab, extending across the bay, indicating that the slab was not in its original position. It was decided to move the slab 0.50m north to allow groundworks to continue.

Once exposed, the brick built feature (106) (Fig. 4; Plates 1-4) appeared to be a backfilled 19<sup>th</sup> century boiler house, the southwest corner of which had been hidden below the grave slab. It consisted of a west wall (*c*0.22m wide) and a south wall that ran parallel to the wall of the north aisle (*c*0.40m wide). Ash and cinder layers containing large fragments of slag were observed within and outside of this feature. The bricks of (106) measured 10x22x6cm (4x8.5x2.4 inches), had horizontal skintlings and were set in a Flemish bond using a light whitish yellow lime mortar. The internal measurements were 1.50m north to south, however the overall size of the building is not known, as the south wall extended under the Chapter House and the west wall extended into the baulk. Although the feature was not excavated to the base, the use of an auger allowed the depth to be judged. The feature continued for at least 1.5m below ground level before a solid obstruction was encountered, which appeared to be concrete.

#### Chalk block (Bay 5)

A large rectangular block of chalk that measured >0.44m long by 0.30m wide and 0.14m deep was observed at the eastern end of Bay 5 (Fig. 6; Plate 9). This block was incorporated into the brickwork of the foundation wall and it is likely that this block marked the positioning of an earlier buttress or structure. Cemetery soil lay beneath the block and no other stones of this composition were visible within the excavated area.

#### North Aisle foundations (Bays 1-5)

The foundations of Bay 1 and 2 were mostly of roughly coursed limestone rubble that varied in size, with the largest measuring 22x9cm (Fig. 8; Plate 10). This foundation appeared to be the earliest observed on the north aisle; however, cement repair work had been undertaken in



the past. Above ground level, the wall was built of limestone and ironstone set in thick beds of lime mortar with occasional cement mortar.

There was more uniformity in the foundations seen in Bays 3 and 4. They included two courses of dressed ironstone of various sizes (up to 23x15cm) with a mixture of ironstone and limestone rubble below (Fig. 9; Plate 11). The rubble had been arranged more carefully than in Bay 2 and seemed to conform to a random coursing pattern. An iron vent was set into the masonry of Bay 3.

Bay 5 appears to be the last stage of construction and included regularly sized, dressed ironstone blocks, as in the lower courses of the wall above (Plate 12). Once again, the blocks varied in size but were well coursed and set in lime mortar.

#### Brick crypt (Trench 2)

Trench 2 was orientated north-south and ran parallel to the modern Chapter House. It was approximately 10m in length and 0.50m wide. A small amount of charnel remains was recovered from this trench, as was some modern pottery. To the north of the trench, a section of an arched brick built crypt (104) was observed 0.50m below the current ground level (Fig. 5; Plate 6). The crypt continued below the necessary trench depth and was obscured by the baulk to the north and west.

#### SK1 (Trench 3)

Trench 3 was orientated east-west and ran parallel to the north aisle for approximately 18.0m. The last 4.0m at the western end angled to the south to join the northwest corner of the church (Fig.4). A number of burials had been disturbed at the western end of the trench during the installation of a gas pipe, and the charnel remains in this area were denser than elsewhere on the site at this particular depth. It appears that the ground workers installing the pipe had attempted to re-articulate one of the skeletons, as several bones of an adult male [SK1] had been placed in anatomical position, albeit in a rather uninformed way, on top of the hazard tape that lay above the gas pipe (Fig. 7; Plate 7). To the east of [SK1] there was a shallow pile of charnel remains containing the bones of several individuals, including at least one non-adult (Plate 8).

#### **Context Table**

Context no.	Туре	Dimensions (max)	Description	
100	0 Layer D: 0.09m		Topsoil	
101	Layer D:<1.11m		Cemetery soil	
102	Masonry	D: 0.60m below ground level	Bay 1 & 2 Foundations. Limestone and Ironstone	
103	Masonry	D: 0.60m below ground level	Bay 3 & 4 foundations. Limestone and Ironstone	
104	Structure	L:>0.50m W:>0.19m D:>0.35	Corner of an arch that appears to belong to a crypt. Built of red brick 10x22X6cm set in lime mortar	
105	Masonry	D:0.60m below ground level	Buttress foundation Bay 2	
106 Masonry W:>1.50		L: >1.70m W:>1.50m D:C.0.90m	Boiler room: Brick built structure	
107	Masonry	L: >0.44m W: 0.30m D: 0.14m	Block of chalk.	



Context no.	Туре	Dimensions (max)	Description	
108	Layer	L: 0.22m W: Irregular D: 0.06m	Gravel path running parallel to northern aisle. Set in a mid-grey brown sandy silt  Accumulative deposit of ash and cinder. Greyish purple ashy silt which was compact but crumbly. Contained frequent slag and occasional charcoal and coal inclusions. Only observable in the areas within and surrounding (106)	
109	Layer	L:1.74m W:0.38m D: 0.07m		
110	Layer	L:1.74m W:0.38m D:0.04m	Mid grey brown silty sand with brick inclusions. Contained occasional small sub-angular stones and charcoal. Probably cemetery soil which had become contaminated by boiler room (106)	
111	Layer	L:1.74m W:0.38m D:0.09m	Secondary accumulative deposit of ash and cinder. Greyish purple ashy silt which was compact but crum Contained frequent slag and occasional charcoal and coal inclusions. Once again only observable in the are within and surrounding (106)	
112	Layer	L:1.74m W:0.38m D:<0.70m	Secondary layer of mid grey brown silty sand	





Plate 1: Bay 1 prior to grave stone move



Plate 2: Bay 1 after grave stone moved



Plate 3: (106) Boiler house western wall



Plate 4: (106) Boiler house southern wall



Plate 5: Hatherell Gravestone



Plate 6: (104) brick built crypt in Trench 2





252 AGC T3 CHAR

Plate 7: SK1

Plate 8: Charnel remains in Trench 3





Plate 9: (107) Block of chalk found in Bay 5

Plate 10: (102) Bay 2 foundations





Plate 11: (103) Bay 3 foundations

Plate 12: Bay 5 foundations



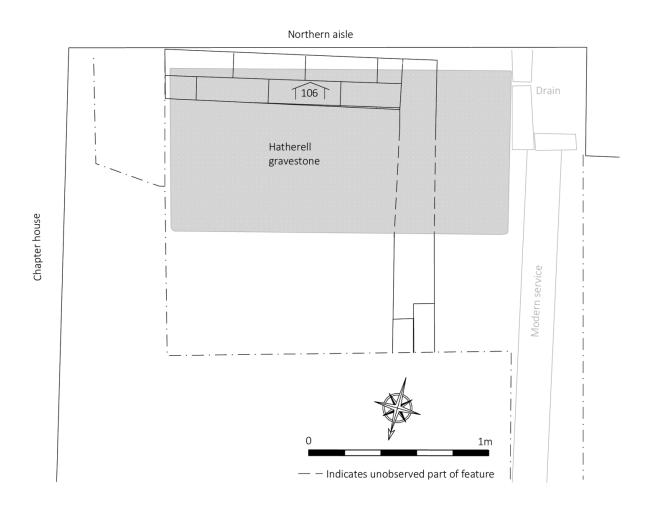


Figure 4: Plan of features in Bay 1 (scale 1:20)



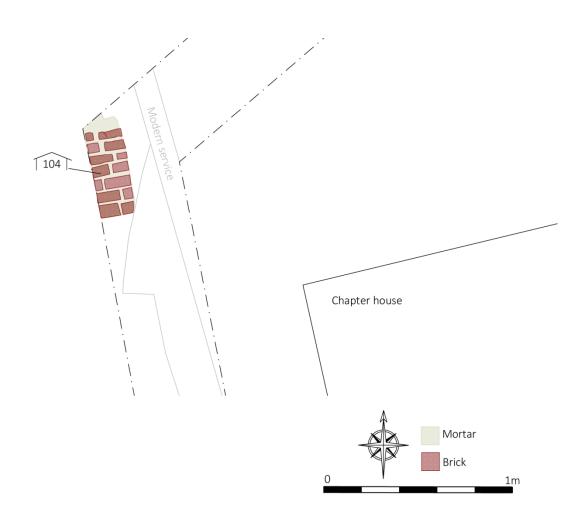


Figure 5: Brick crypt (104) (scale 1:20)



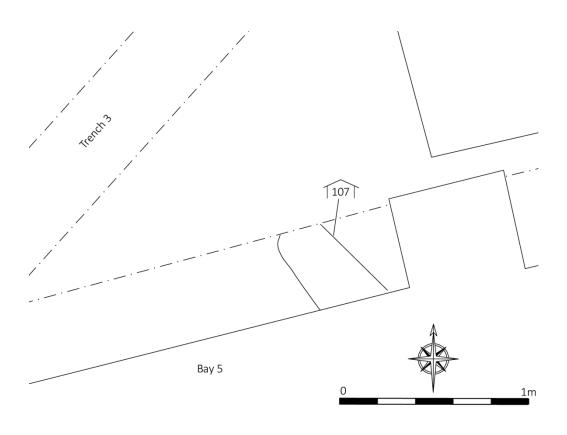
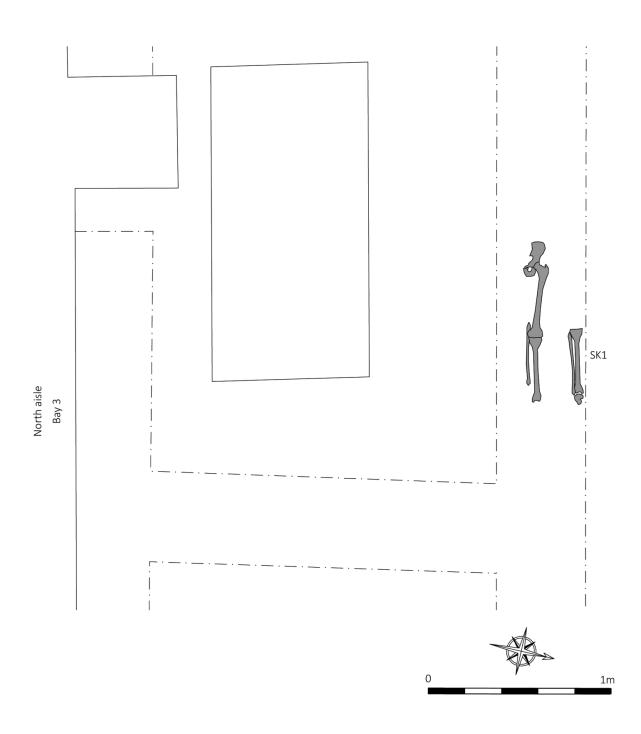


Figure 6: Chalk block (107) (scale 1:20)





**Figure 7:** SK1 (scale 1:20)



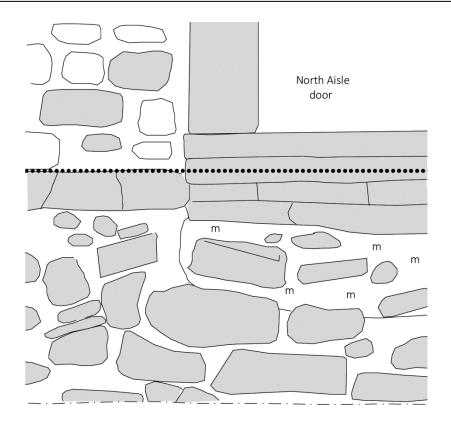


Figure 8: Bay 2 foundations (scale 1:10)

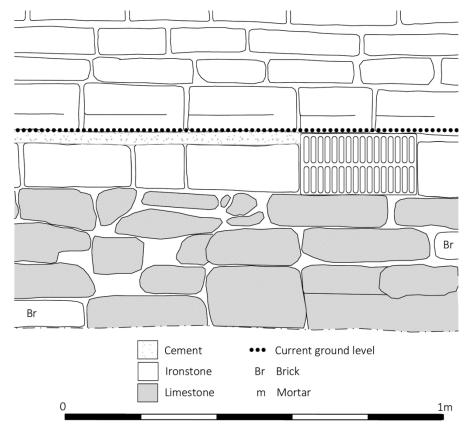


Figure 9: Bay 3 foundations (scale 1:10)



#### 5 Conclusions

The multiple phases of building and restoration of the north aisle were evident from the variety of construction techniques used in the foundations and the walls above. The earliest foundations appear at the east end of the north aisle and consist of roughly dressed limestone rubble. This may be a survival of the original medieval construction phase. Further westwards, the rubble is more evenly coursed and ironstone masonry was also observed. Patches of repair work are evident in the walls, particularly in Bays 1 and 2 where the stonework is of randomly coursed rubble. The west end of the foundation in Bay 5 consists entirely of well coursed, regularly sized ironstone. These repairs and new construction probably date to known episodes of renovation in 1855 and post-1880.

The only indication of potential masonry predating the current north aisle was a single large chalk block (107), which was found towards the western end of the building in Bay 5 and may have been part of a buttress.

The remains of two structures were revealed during the groundworks; the remains of the 19<sup>th</sup> century boiler house and a brick built crypt of uncertain date.

The lack of articulated burials was surprising, particularly within the soakaway, which reached a depth of 1.2m. The ground level to the north of the church is considerably higher than the ground level of the church. This might be a result of the major renovation undertaken in 1855, which may have buried any existing graves below the depth reached during this investigation. The majority of the marked graves in this section of the churchyard date to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, supporting the theory that mid-century construction created what was essentially new ground within the churchyard.

The only partially articulated burial was SK1, found rearranged above the gas pipe in Trench 3. These remains, along with the other charnel remains found in Trench 3, had been moved, but indicate that installation of the gas pipe disturbed a number of graves.



### 6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Priory Heritage Ltd for commissioning this report on behalf of St Botolph's PCC. Thanks are also due to David Baker Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA) for the Diocese of St Albans for monitoring the project.

KDK Archaeology would also like to thank Steve, Tom and Matthew from Steve Todd Stonemasons for their assistance on site.

The fieldwork was carried out by Laura Dodd MSc and Barnaby King. The report was written by Laura Dodd MSc, and edited by Ellen Shlasko PhD.



### 7 Archive

- 7.1 The project archive will comprise:
  - 1. Written Scheme of Investigation
  - 2. Initial report
  - 3. Monitoring sheets
  - 4. Site drawings
  - 5. Client's site plans
  - 6. List of photographs
  - 7. B/W prints & negatives
  - 8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.
- 7.2 The archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (Accession BEDFM: 2016.79).



#### 8 References

#### Standards & Specifications

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## Appendix 1: Photograph List

SITE NO/CODE:252/AGC			Site Name: St Botolph's	
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject	
1		X	Ann and Sophia Hatherell grave slab	
2		X	Grave stone and cement foundation	
3		Х	Grave stone and cement foundation	
4		X	Trench 2 looking north	
5		Х	Trench 1 looking northeast	
6		Х	Soak-away looking north northeast	
7		Х	Soak-away stratigraphy north northeast	
8		Х	North aisle foundations (Bay 2)	
9	Х	Х	Crypt wall (104) looking north northwest	
10	Х	Х	Foundation Bay 3 (103 looking south	
11	Х	Х	Bay 3 Buttress foundation (105) looking east	
12		Х	Bay 3 Buttress foundation (105) looking east	
13	Х	Х	Bay 2 foundations (102) looking south	
14	Х	Х	Boiler room wall (106) looking west	
15	Х	Х	Boiler room wall (106) north northeast facing section	
16		Х	Boiler room wall (106) north northwest facing section	
17		Х	Boiler room wall (106) south southeast facing section	
18	Х	Х	Bay 1 looking south east	
19		Х	Bay 1 stratigraphy looking north northeast	
20	Х	Х	SK1 looking north northwest	
21	Х	Х	T3 Charnel remains	
22		Х	(106) after Hatherell slab relocation looking south southeast	
23		Х	(106) after Hatherell slab relocation looking south southeast	
24		Х	Bay 1 after Hatherell slab relocation south southeast	
25	Х	Х	Bay 2 south southeast	
26	Χ	Х	Bay 3 south southeast	
27	Х	Х	Bay 4 looking southwest	
28	Х	Х	Trench 3 looking west southwest	
29		Х	Trench 3 looking west southwest	
30	Х	Х	Bay 1 foundations	
31	Х	Х	Chalk slab (107) looking northeast	
32		Х	Chalk slab (107) looking northeast	
33	Х	Х	Bay 5 looking northeast	
34	Х	Х	Bay 5 foundations	
35	Х	Х	Bay 1-Trench 3 looking south	
36	Х	Х	Bay 3-Trench 3 looking south	
37	Х	Х	Bay 4-Trench 3 looking south	



## Appendix 2: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS					
Project Name & Address	St Botolph's Church, Aspley Guise, Bedfordshire  Project Site Code		252/AGC		
OASIS reference	kdkarcha1-266323 Event/Accession no		BEDFM 2016.79		
OS reference	SP 9425 3625 Study area size		32 sq m		
Project Type	Watching Brief	Height (mAOD)	109		
In February 2017, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Observation and Recording of St Botolph's Church, Aspley Guise, Bedfordshire during groundworks to improve drainage along the north elevation of the church.  The north aisle of the church was constructed in several phases starting in the medieval period, and has undergone extensive rebuilding, mostly in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century. The original construction, as well as later rebuilding phases, was evident in the different construction methods observed in the exposed foundations. Trenches also revealed the remains of a 19 <sup>th</sup> century boiler house adjacent to the church and an undated brick built crypt near the modern Chapter House. Although one of the trenches ran through the churchyard, only a single, disturbed burial was encountered during this exercise.					
Previous work	None	Site status	Grade II* listed		
Planning proposal	Proposal Re-lay and improve original drainage Current land use		Churchyard		
Local Planning Authority	ning Authority Central Bedfordshire Council Planning application ref.		N/A		
Monument type	Demolished boiler house, brick built crypt  Demolished boiler house, brick built donument period		Medieval - post medieval		
Significant finds	Crypt	Future work	Unknown		
	PROJECT (	CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd				
Project Brief originator	-	Project Design originator KDK Archaeology Ltd			
Project Manager	Karin Kaye	Director/Supervisor	Laura Dodd		
Sponsor/funding body	Priory Heritage Ltd				
	PROJEC	T DATE			
Start date	10.02.17	End date 27.0			
	PROJECT /	ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (e.g. pottery,	animal bone, files/sheets)		
Physical		N/A			
Paper	Bedford Museum	WSI, report, site records, b&w photographs			
Digital CD containing all digital data					
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)					
Title	Title Archaeological Observation and Recording: St Botolph's Church, Aspley Guise, Bedfordshire				
Serial title & volume	KDK Archaeology Ltd Report ref. 2	Archaeology Ltd Report ref. 252/AGC/2			
Author(s)	Laura Dodd MSc				
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