



**Archaeological observation, investigation
recording and analysis of land at the
Church of St Mary, Ringstead
Northamptonshire
November-December 2014**

Report No 14/266

Author: Tim Sharman

Illustrator: James Ladocha



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Clay tobacco-pipe Tora Hylton

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THE CHURCH OF ST MARY, RINGSTEAD

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-198594	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation, analysis and recording of land at The Church of St Mary, Ringstead, Northamptonshire November-December 2014		
Short description	An archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was carried out by MOLA, during construction works at The Church of St Mary, Ringstead, Northamptonshire. Two archaeological features were present comprising a post-medieval brick-lined grave vault and the remains of the churchyard wall.		
Project type	Watching Brief		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Parish Church and graveyard		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Medieval church, post-medieval burial vault		
Significant finds	Post-medieval pottery		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	The Church of St Mary, Ringstead		
Easting Northing	SP 98603 75125		
Area (sq m/ha)	0.01ha		
Height aOD			
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Quinton Carroll, Diocesan Archaeologist		
Project Design originator	MOLA		
Director/Supervisor	Tim Sharman		
Project Manager	Anthony Maull		
Sponsor or funding body	Ringstead PCC		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	13/11/2014		
End date	08/12/2014		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical		Watching brief forms, permatrace plans	
Paper			
Digital		Client report PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
	Unpublished client report		
Title	Archaeological observation, investigation, analysis and recording of land at The Church of St Mary, Ringstead, Northamptonshire November-December 2014		
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Archaeological observation, investigation recording and analysis of land at The Church of St Mary, Ringstead, Northamptonshire November-December 2014

Abstract

An archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was carried out by MOLA Northampton during construction works at the Church of St Mary, Ringstead, Northamptonshire. Two archaeological features were present comprising a post-medieval brick-lined grave vault and the remains of the churchyard wall.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Diocesan Archaeologist and Ringstead Parochial Church Council commissioned MOLA Northampton to carry out archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and reporting on land at St Mary's Church, Ringstead, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 98603 75125; Fig 1). In order to facilitate the connection of mains services to a new kitchen and toilet within the nave of the church a trench, 15m long, was dug across the churchyard. In response to this a brief was prepared by the Diocesan Archaeologist setting out the requirements for archaeological mitigation in the form of a watching brief (Carroll 2014) and work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA Northampton (Finn 2014).

MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) registered organisation. This document has been prepared in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a) and the procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2009).

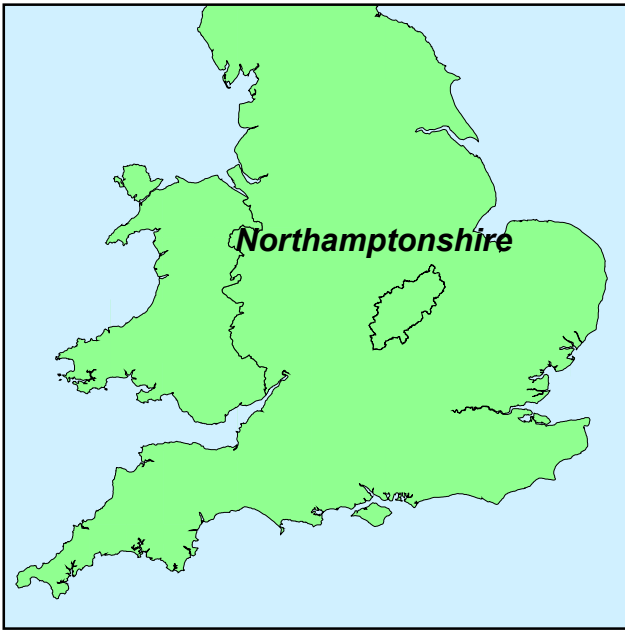
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

St Mary's Church is situated within the village of Ringstead, in the east of the county of Northamptonshire. Ringstead parish covers about 800ha and lies between 36m and 77m above OD (RCHME 1975, 83). The village itself lies on a small tributary of the River Nene, and the settlement is built up along either side of the stream along the valley floor and lower slopes. Housing plots are clustered along three main streets running east-west through the village (Parry 2006, 211).

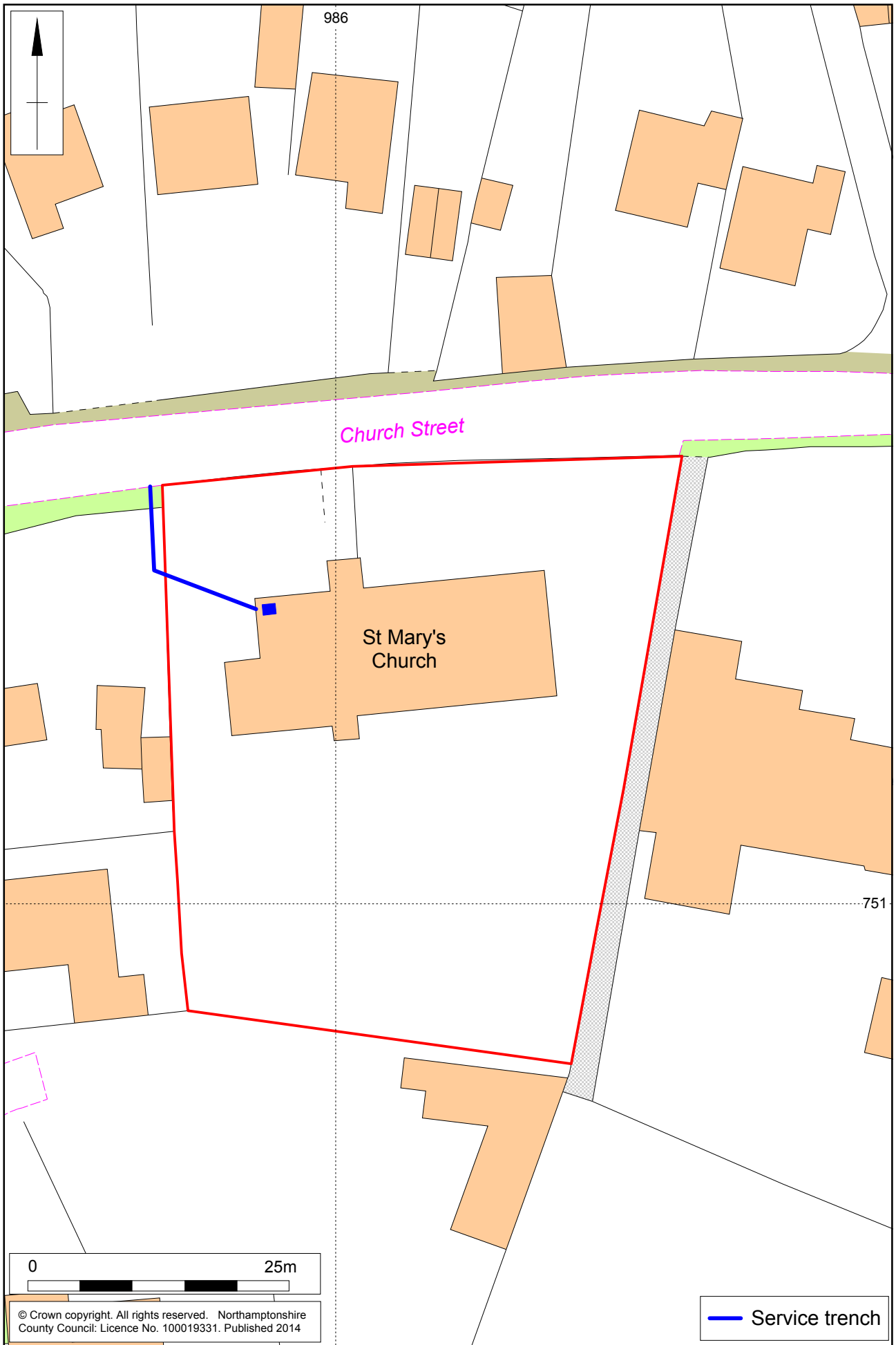
St Mary's Church is situated in the centre of the village, on the south side of Church Street. The churchyard occupies 0.2ha and is bounded by residential buildings to the south and west, Church Street to the north, and by Ringstead Church of England Primary School to the east.

The geology of the village comprises Terrace River Gravel and Upper Lias Clays along the valley floor, giving way to Northamptonshire Sand Ironstone, Estuarine clays and silts, and Great Oolite Limestone on the middle slopes of the valley (Parry 2006, 211).



Scale 1:5,000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1: 500

Area of investigation Fig 2

2.2 Archaeological and historical background

The early history of St Mary's church is not known, although it is not unlikely that the current building obscures early medieval features. As it stands today, the church has a 13th-century tower, chapel and arcade and 15th-century features are also visible, and some later additions to the building were made in the 19th century (Bailey, Pevsner and Cherry 2013, 543-544) No previous archaeological work has taken place.

Little is known about the development and early history of Ringstead. The village is not recorded in Domesday Book, and is generally poorly documented during the medieval period (Courtney 2006, 211). Little archaeological work has been undertaken in the village due to static development and relatively dense settlement, and building works which have taken place have revealed little in the way of pre-19th-century habitation (Parry 2006, 211). The deserted medieval settlement of Mill Cotton lay less than 1.5km away from Ringstead to the west, close to where an Iron Age settlement and Roman villa were discovered in 1971 (NGR SP 9768 7482; (RCHME 1975, 83). The surrounding fields to the west have also produced high densities of Roman pottery and coins.

Archaeological finds from within 1km of the church are summarised below.

Prehistoric activity is suggested by two flint concentrations found on opposite sides of the valley, between 50m and 60m above sea level. Early-middle Saxon surface scatters have also been located in this zone, about 600m apart. These may be the result of manuring activities. A small quantity of Saxon ceramic material was located in the centre of the village during construction to the north of the High Street (SP 9883 7524) about 250m north-east of the church (Parry 2006, 213). Other evidence of agricultural practices can be seen in the ridge and furrow observable in the fields surrounding the village to the north, north-east, south-east, south, and south-west (Partida, Hall and Foard 2013, 39).

A medieval kiln was reportedly discovered 500m from the church, but this discovery has not been verified (Parry 2006, 211). A small group of medieval pottery fragments were recovered during the development of Ringstead Church of England Primary School, which lies directly adjacent to the churchyard. No structures or other archaeological features were observed (Bellamy 1976).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area the objectives of the investigation are to:

- Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits, exposed during the groundworks;
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Recover any artefacts that may assist in the development of pottery type series within the region;
- Establish the relationship of any archaeological deposits within the wider

contemporary landscape;

- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

3.2 Methodology

Recording followed standard MOLA Northampton procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (2014). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. Photography was with 35mm black and white film and digital images.

All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2014) and *Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008).

Within the observation area the excavation of two narrow, conjoined service trenches were observed in generally good weather conditions on one occasion during November, together with the inspection of some excavation work within the church interior on two separate occasions in November and December (Fig 2). A small mechanical excavator was used for the excavation of a trench which lay just outside the area of the churchyard. Within the churchyard and church all excavation work was carried out by hand. The groundwork areas were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features, if present.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

Archaeological features were encountered in Trenches 1 and 3, no archaeological features in Trench 2.

4.1 Trench 1

This trench was excavated by hand from the north-west corner of the church nave, to where it joined Trench 2 south of the north-west corner of the churchyard (Figs 2 and 3). The trench was aligned south-east to north-west, approximately 10m long by 0.4m wide and 0.6m deep.

The natural substrate was not observed in this trench. The subsoil comprised a layer, 0.35m deep, of dark yellowish-brown sandy clay loam subsoil with numerous small to medium-sized fragments of limestone and ironstone together with some fragments of brick and tile (Fig 4). The topsoil, 0.25m deep, was a dark brown loam with a few small limestone inclusions (101).

At the western end of this trench the remains of the former western wall of the churchyard (103) were observed (Fig 5). The remains consisted of approximately three courses of rough-hewn limestone overlying approximately five courses of rough-hewn limestone and ironstone blocks. At least one large fragment of dressed limestone masonry was observed. Four sherds of post-medieval pottery and one fragment of clay tobacco-pipe stem were noted in the spoil heap.



Trench 1, looking south-east

Fig 3



Trench 1, section showing stratigraphy, looking north-east

Fig 4



Former churchyard wall (103), looking north-east

Fig 5

4.2 Trench 2

This trench was excavated by machine immediately outside of, and parallel with, the western wall of the churchyard, from the edge of Church Street southwards to join trench 1 (Fig 2). It was 8m long by 0.4m wide by 0.6m deep (Fig 6). This trench was dug to link the subsequently installed foul waste pipe to a sewer in Church Street.

The natural substrate (202) was observed c 0.5m below ground level and consisted of a yellowish-brown sandy clay with a few large fragments of limestone. Overlying this was a layer, 0.5m deep, of dark brown loam topsoil with a few small limestone inclusions. No obvious subsoil layer was apparent in this trench. However, as the trench had largely been dug through an allotment, it is possible the stratigraphy may represent made-up ground due to frequent composting or manuring.

No archaeological features were noted in this trench, though five sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the spoil heap.

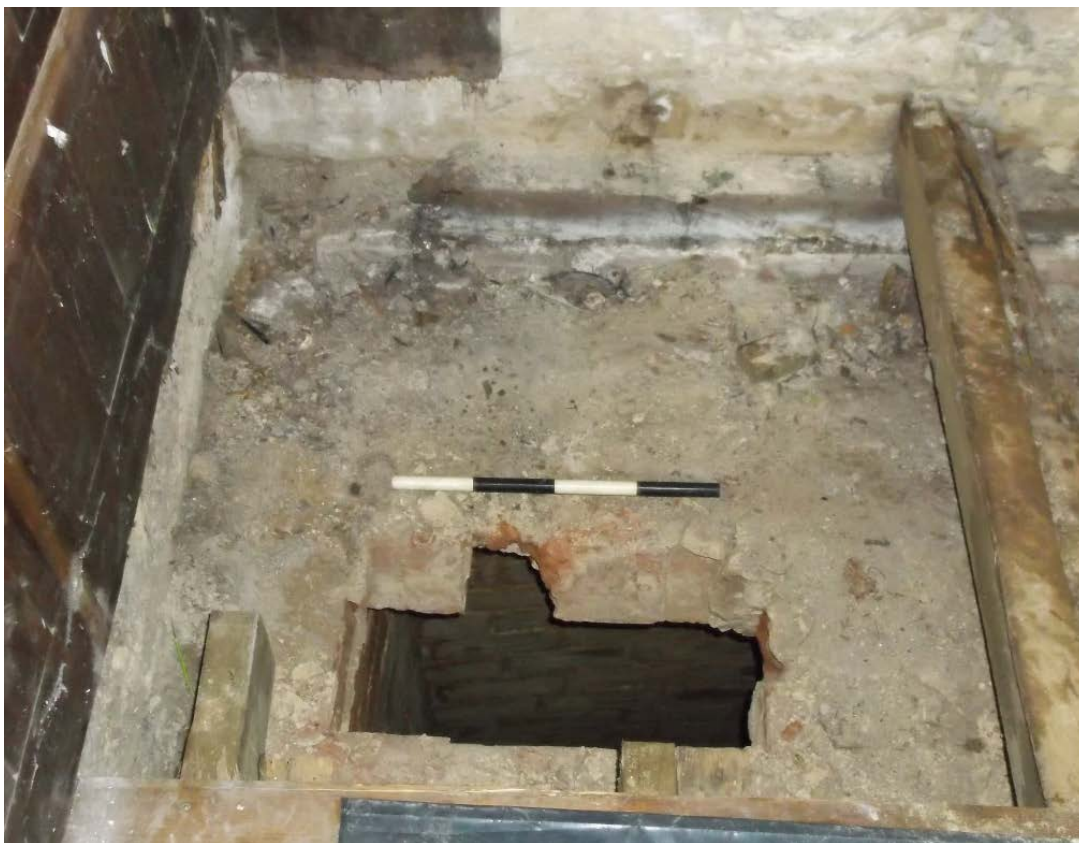


Trench 2, looking north Fig 6

4.3 Trench 3

A small area of 19th-century timber flooring, 1.2m long by 1m wide, was removed in the extreme north-west corner of the nave during preparatory work for the insertion of pipework associated with the installation of a new kitchen and toilet (Fig 2). Within this area, a small trench, 0.45m long by 0.2m wide, was cut through the mortared sub-base remains of the earlier underlying floor, beneath which was a void.

An inspection of the resulting void revealed that a brick-lined vault (103) lay beneath (Figs 7, 8 and 9). On the floor of the vault, approximately 2m below the barrel-vaulted roof, lay a timber coffin. The sides appeared to be intact but the lid had collapsed, especially where debris from the vault roof had fallen in at the west end of the vault. Above the coffin were four iron support bars fixed to the vault walls ready for the insertion of another coffin.



Trench 3 looking north, showing cut through vault roof Fig 7



Vault (303), west end of interior showing debris from damaged vault roof Fig 8



Vault (303), interior looking towards east end of vault Fig 9

5 THE FINDS

5.1 The pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised nine sherds with a total weight of 425g. It was all of 18th-19th century date, and unstratified (Table 1). It was recorded using the conventions of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS), as follows:

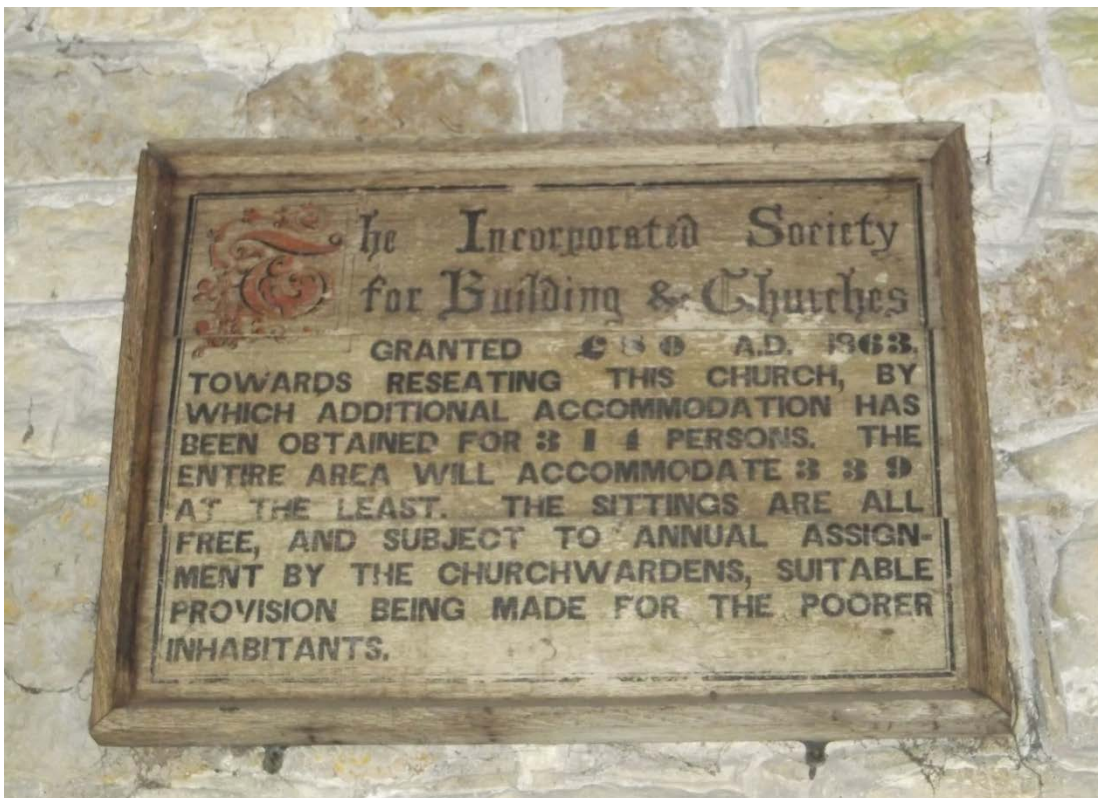
F426: Iron-Glazed Coarsewares, c late 17th–18th centuries, 5 sherds, 212g
 F1000: Misc 19th and 20th century wares, 4 sherds, 213g

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (g) of sherds per context and fabric

Fabric Context	F426		F1000		Date
	No	Weight (g)	No	Weight (g)	
T1 U/S	4	187	-	-	U/S
T2 U/S	1	25	4	213	U/S
Total	5	212	4	213	

5.2 Clay tobacco-pipe by Tora Hylton

A small fragment of clay tobacco-pipe stem, measuring 17mm in length, was recovered from topsoil overlying Trench 1. The small bore suggests a late 18th/19th century date for the fragment.



Plaque on church porch wall recording church interior alterations Fig 10



Stone memorial slab with space left for future inscription Fig 11

6 DISCUSSION

Parts of the wall along the western boundary of the churchyard were still extant in places, but had largely been demolished in the area of observation. The footings of the western wall of the churchyard were cut through and exposed during monitoring of the service trenches. Although the footings largely consisted of large coarse blocks of limestone or ironstone, some dressed blocks of stone may be indicative of the re-use of medieval masonry suggesting that the footings could be late medieval or post-medieval. The surviving portions of wall along the western churchyard boundary appear to be post-medieval.

The grave vault uncovered within the north-west corner of the nave probably dates to the 18th or 19th centuries. The grave vault incorporated four evenly-spaced, iron bars immediately above the coffin to support a future interment which did not occur. The vault pre-dates the current timber floor which replaced an earlier stone or tiled floor. The date for the laying of the current timber floor is unknown, however, within the church porch a plaque records a grant of £80 being made in 1863 towards 're-seating' within the church and the provision of additional seating (Fig 10). It is likely that new pews installed as part of this work, were placed on a new floor at the same time.

The identity of the occupant of the vault will probably never be known or why provision was made for another burial above. However, within the church tower a series of wall and floor memorials have been relocated to the interior walls, probably as a result of refurbishment of the nave interior. One relocated floor memorial had an inscription on the upper portion only, the lower portion left blank possibly in anticipation of a spouse who never was interred in the same place. The inscription reads: *Near this place lies the remains of Henry Hudson who died y 28th June 1798 aged 62 years* (Fig 11). It is tempting to suggest that the inscription is related to the grave vault, but as further examination of the vault interior is no longer possible, this may never be proven unless perhaps the opportunity arises for further documentary research.

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MOLA
23 December 2014

APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment			
1	10m x 0.4m NW - SE			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Layer	Dark brown loam topsoil with a few limestone inclusions	0.25m thick	---
102	Layer	Dark yellowish-brown sandy clay loam sub-soil with numerous small to medium limestone and pebbles	0.35m thick	---
103	Wall	Approximately six courses of large blocks of ironstone and limestone forming the foundation of a churchyard wall	0.6m x 0.5m wide	---

Trench No	Length, width & alignment			
2	8m x 0.4m N - S			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
201	Layer	Dark brown loam topsoil with a few small limestone pebble inclusions	0.45m thick	---
202	Natural	Yellowish-brown sandy clay with some large fragments of limestone	0.15m thick	---

Trench No	Length, width & alignment			
3	1.2m x 1m In NW corner of Nave			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
301	Floor	Linear timber floorboards on supporting timber joists	c0.12m thick	—
302	Layer	Loose cream coloured mortar	c0.03m thick	—
303	Grave vault	Brick-lined grave vault with barrel vaulted roof	c2m long x c1m wide x c1.8m deep	—
304	Fill	Timber coffin with collapsed lid, overlain by 4 iron support bars fixed to the surrounding vault walls	c1.8m long x 0.5m wide	—



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