



**Archaeological observation at  
the Church of St Laurence  
Stanwick, Northamptonshire  
August 2015**

Report No. 15/160

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NGR: SP 98015 71455  
Event Number: TBC

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# Archaeological observation at the Church of St Laurence Stanwick, Northamptonshire August 2015

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Quality control and sign off:

Issue No.	Date approved:	Checked by:	Verified by:	Approved by:	Status:	Reason for Issue:
1	08.09.15	P Chapman	A Bassir	A Chapman	Awaiting approval	Draft for client review

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		OASIS molanort1-222739	
Project title	Archaeological observation at the Church of St Laurence, Stanwick, Northamptonshire		
Short description	MOLA Northampton was invited to undertake a programme of archaeological observation at the Church of St Laurence, Stanwick, during groundworks associated with the installation of a new heating system within the church. The works comprised the lifting of stone floor slabs at the west end of the church, the reduction of ground level within these areas and the excavation of pipe trenches and inspection chambers. A number of disarticulated and disturbed human remains, a stone-capped drain and brick flues relating to a previous heating system were identified and recorded.		
Project type	Watching brief		
Site status	Grade I listed		
Previous work	None		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Church, 13th century		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Church of St Laurence, Stanwick		
NGR	SP 98015 71455		
Area	c39m <sup>2</sup>		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Cambs CC Historic Environment Team Manager		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Amir Bassir		
Project Manager	Amir Bassir		
Sponsor or funding body	Bruce Deacon Architect		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	11th August 2015		
End date	13th August 2015		
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Title	Archaeological observation at the Church of St Laurence, Stanwick, Northamptonshire, August 2015		
Serial title	MOLA report, 15/160		
Author(s)	Amir Bassir, Claire Finn		
Page numbers	15		
Date	08 September 2015		

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# Archaeological observation at the Church of St Laurence Stanwick, Northamptonshire August 2015

## ABSTRACT

*MOLA Northampton was invited to undertake a programme of archaeological observation at the Church of St Laurence, Stanwick, during groundworks associated with the installation of a new heating system within the church. The works comprised the lifting of stone floor slabs at the west end of the church, the reduction of ground level within these areas and the excavation of pipe trenches and inspection chambers. A number of disarticulated and disturbed human remains, a stone-capped drain and brick flues relating to a previous heating system were identified and recorded.*

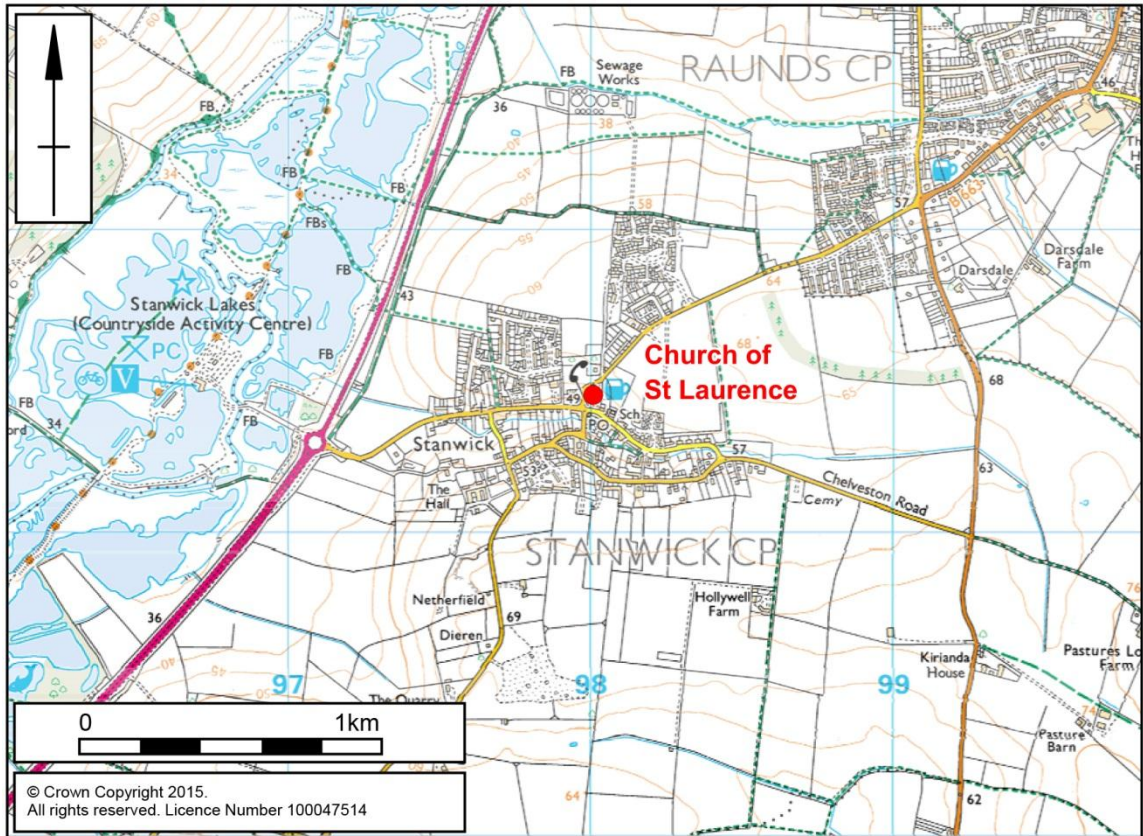
## 1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by Bruce Deacon Architect to undertake a programme of archaeological observation and recording at the Church of St Laurence, Stanwick, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 98015 71455, Fig 1).

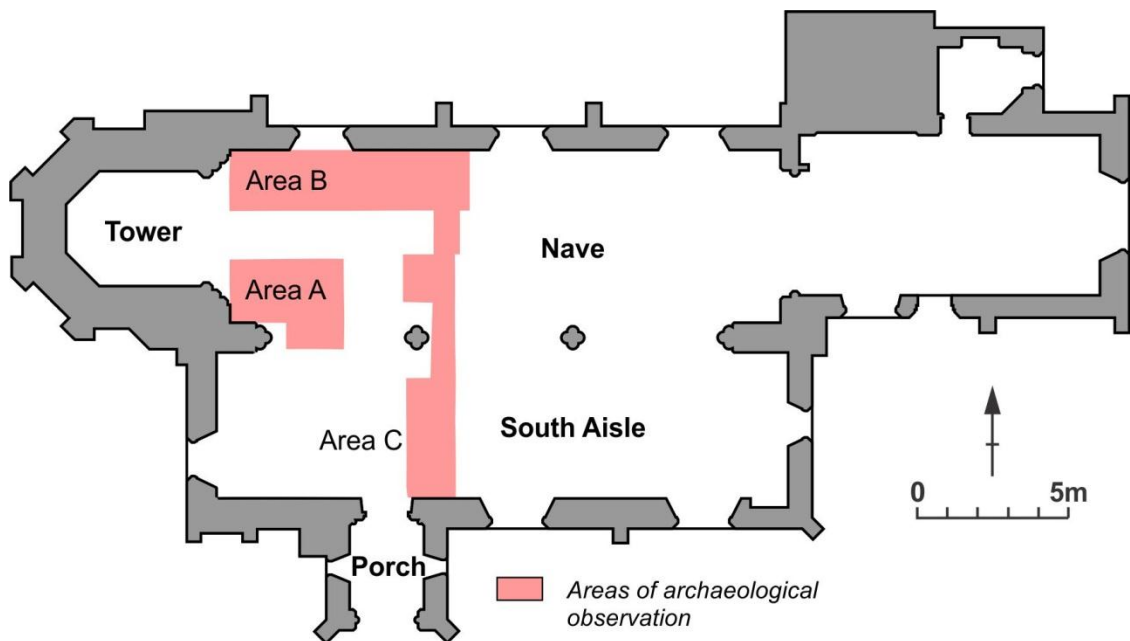
This report follows a statement of methodology (MOLA 2015) which was approved prior to commencement of fieldwork.

The Church of St Laurence is located at the north-eastern edge of the village of Stanwick, to the north-east of the crossroads of Spencer Parade, Church Street, High Street and Raunds Road. The church is situated at the centre of a graveyard which is encircled by Raunds Road and Church Street. The site is bound to the west, south and north by residential properties and enclosed fields to the east.

The church is located on high ground (c55m aOD) which slopes westward towards the River Nene, and the tower and its spire are a prominent feature of the village. The underlying geology of the area has been mapped as comprising the Jurassic Whitby Mudstone Formation, overlain by Quaternary sand and gravel river deposits (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>).



Site location Fig 1



The areas of archaeological observation Fig 2

## 2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The works were carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014a), and *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014b), and the Historic England document *MoRPHE* (HE 2015).

The objectives of the work were set out as follows:

- Identify, investigate and record any archaeological deposits or features 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 fieldwork and analysis.

The areas of observation were hand-excavated by the appointed contractors, under archaeological supervision, between the 11th and 13th August 2015. The ground within the excavation areas were reduced to approximately 200mm to allow for the installation of piping for the new heating system and the up-cast material was inspected for finds and fragmentary human remains. A number of disarticulated human remains were identified within the excavation areas. These were recorded in accordance with the guidelines detailed in the *MOLA Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (MOLA 2014). All human remains were kept on-site and will be reburied in due course. The extent of the areas of observation and the locations of all human remains and archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:20 and photographed, both digitally and with black and white 35mm film.



### 3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The church is a Grade I listed building (listing ref: 232411), of which the west tower, the chancel and the arcades are 13th century in origin (Bailey *et al* 2013, 585) The chancel was largely re-built in the 15th century and reduced in width. The former north aisle was removed at an unknown date, though likely mid-17th century, and the north side of the nave was made good in 1664. The church was restored in 1856 and 1896 when the organ-chamber and vestry were added.

The listing description is as follows:

*Church. C13 and C14, restored 1858. Regular coursed and squared coursed limestone with ashlar spire. Lead, Colleyweston slate and plain tile roofs. Nave, chancel south aisle, organ chamber and vestry, south porch and west tower. South elevation of chancel of 2 bays, one-window range with 3-light windows under 4-centred arch heads. 6-panel C18 arch-head south door to centre. Ashlar buttresses between bays. Shallow gabled roof with castellated ashlar parapet and finial. 4-light Perpendicular east window with 4-centred head and curved label stops. North elevation of chancel has C19 lean-to vestry and gabled organ chamber attached. 3-light north window and 2-light east window. Plain tile roof. South aisle of 4 bays; 2-window range of 3-light Perpendicular windows to right, with 4-centred arch heads. Small blocked doorway in left bay. Lean-to roof with castellated ashlar parapet. 2-light square-head east and west windows. 2-storey gabled porch in bay to left of centre, has double chamfered outer arch with 2-light square-head window above. Chamfered and stepped inner doorway has one order of shafts. Shallow gabled roof with castellated ashlar parapet and finial. Stair turret with lean-to stone roof to left of porch. North elevation of nave of 3-window range of tall 3-light windows with 4-centred arch heads. Blocked north door to right of centre has carved tablet above. 3-stage buttresses between bays. Steep gabled roof with Colleyweston slates, castellated ashlar parapet and gable finial. Octagonal west tower of 2 stages with shallow buttresses to lower part of first stage. West lancet window with octofoil window above. Upper stage is set back with 2-light bell-chamber openings in the cardinal directions and similar blind arcading, each with central corbel, to the diagonal faces of the octagon. Octagonal ashlar spire has corbel table and castellated frieze at base. 3 tiers of lucarnes. Polygonal stair turret is attached to north face of tower. Interior: 3-bay south arcade, to nave, of double chamfered arches with quatrefoil piers. Double-chamfered chancel arch with octagonal responds and nail head decoration. Triple chamfered tower arch. C19 roof structures. Double piscina in south aisle has central column. Trefoil-head arched seat to right of chancel arch facing into chancel. C19 chamfered arch to organ chamber. Perpendicular octagonal font, with the stem missing. Monuments: Thomas de Wynchy, C14, inscribed brass strip in chancel floor. John Atkins died 1669 wife and family, inscribed tablet, to left of altar, with arms over. C18 oval tablet to left and various C19 tablets to right. Communion rail has 4 turned balusters. Stained glass: C19 east window, 2 west windows and south aisle east window, the latter is by Kempe. Original scaffold holes are visible in the tower. Pitch hooks for removing burning thatch attached to belfry wall. Room over porch has C20 roof and partially legible inscribed memorial tablet fixed to the wall. (Buildings of England: Northamptonshire, p.412).*

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION

The areas of archaeological observation comprised two main areas of excavation and a narrow pipe trench with inspection chambers (Fig 2). Area A was located to the south-west of the tower, on the north side of the nave arcade. It was roughly L-shape in plan, measuring c3.8 x 3m. Area B was positioned against the north wall of the nave, extending c8m from the east edge of the tower, and was c2m wide. The pipe trench, Area C, was excavated from the north wall of the nave, to the south wall of the south aisle.

The excavations required the lifting of the flagstone floor and associated mortar across all areas. In several areas, a number of planed timber joists had been partly sunk into or overlay the rubble substrate below the flagstones. These joists provided support for the pews.

### 4.1 Area A

Area A was positioned to the south-west of the tower (Figs 3-5). Underlying the stone-floor surface and mortar bedding was a layer of mixed limestone rubble and pale grey-brown sandy gravel, which served as a make-up / levelling layer for the floor. The area was bisected by four cable pipes crossing north to south across the western arm of the area. The area was excavated to a depth of 0.2m.



Area A pre-excavation, looking west Fig 3

Disarticulated human remains had been identified at the start of the groundworks, and several clusters of disarticulated bones were located in the north-east corner of Area 1. These mainly comprised pieces from at least four craniums and several long bone fragments (Fig 4).

Towards the eastern end of the opened area the disarticulated remains of a juvenile burial were visible, including parts of the cranium, mandible, ribs and long bones. The age of the individual has been estimated at 11-12 years using dental eruption.



Disarticulated skeletal remains including juvenile cranium, Area A Fig 4



Area A post-excavation, looking south-west Fig 5

No other archaeological features were visible and no finds were recovered from Area A. The skeletal remains were removed from the areas of excavation for re-interment elsewhere in the church.

#### 4.2 Area B

Area B was situated against the north wall of the nave. Below the flagstones and mortar bedding was a similar substrate of mixed limestone rubble, sand and gravel (Figs 6-10). The area was excavated to a depth of 0.2m. A quantity of disarticulated human skeletal material was mixed with the substrate layer, particularly in the central east end of the trench, where remains comprised a mandible, long bone and pelvis fragments (Fig 7).



Area B pre-excitation, looking east Fig 6



Disarticulated skeletal remains lying beside stone sill, Area B Fig 7

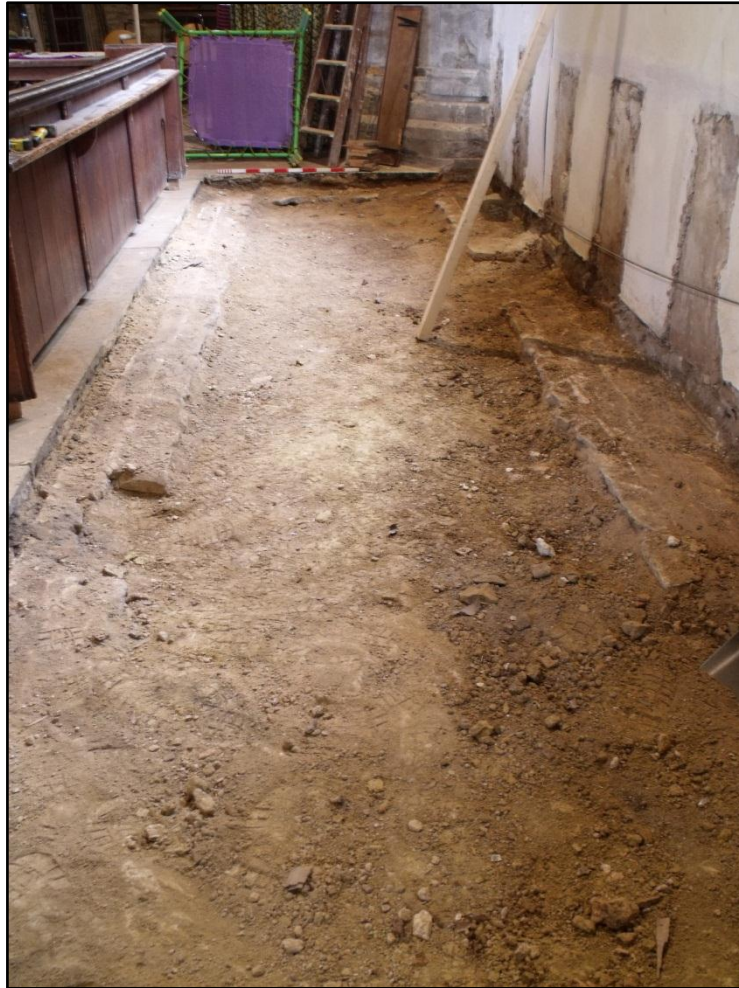
Around 1.2m from the eastern end of the area was a stone-capped drain 0.6m wide, aligned north-south (Figs 8-9). The drain was capped by dressed ashlar slabs. As it was overlain by the stone sills for the Victorian pews, the drain would seem to predate this period of church activity, and may be late medieval, or early post-medieval. No dating evidence was found.



Stone-capped drain, Area B, looking west Fig 8



Stone-capped drain, Area B, looking north Fig 9



Western end of Area B post-excavation, looking west Fig 10

### 4.3 Area C

Area C comprised a trench cut for the installation of underfloor pipework. It was aligned north-south across the width of the nave and aisles, and was between 0.3m and 1.0m wide. The work extended to a depth of c0.35m. Three inspection chambers were positioned at the far north, centre and far south of the pipe trench.

Area C was crossed and bordered in several places by timber sills which formerly edged the area of pews (Figs 11-12, 16). The floor surface in these areas was formed by timber floorboards which overlay timber joists below. When the boards were lifted, the mortar, gravel and crushed limestone substrate below was shown to be scattered with large and medium chunks of wood (Fig 11) and wood plane shavings, indicating the shaping of the wooden joists and sills may have been done in situ (Fig 12). The southern end of the area was also crossed by a metal pipe.

A small quantity of fragmentary human bone was recovered from this area for re-interment at the church.



Area C central section, looking north Fig 11



Area C southern section, looking north Fig 12

While excavating Area C, three brick-built heating flues were uncovered (Figs 13-15). These ran under the flagstones in the aisles between the pews, and were constructed of short walls formed of two bricks laid flat or on the side. The capping was either formed of brick or utilised the flagstones laid above.

The flues were constructed in a loosely-packed mortar and rubble layer which was overlain by the flagstone floor. All of the flues were heavily sooted and are probably the remains of the Victorian-era heating system. In the northern aisle, two of the flues converged.

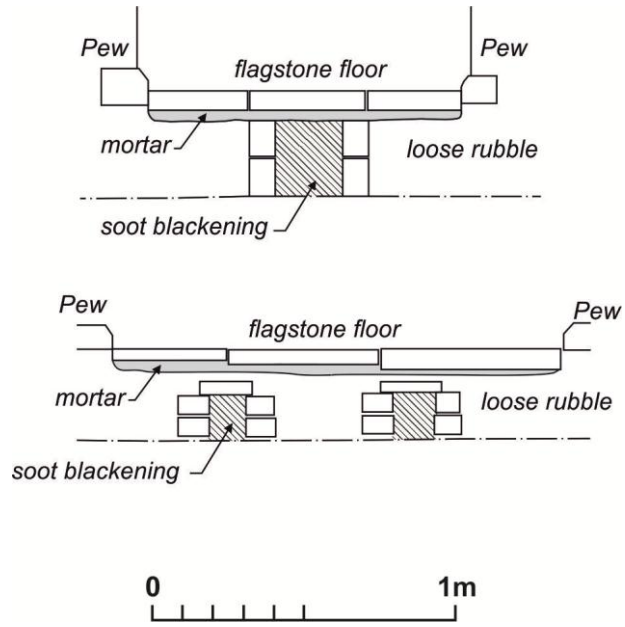


Brick-built flues, northern aisle Area C, looking east Fig 13

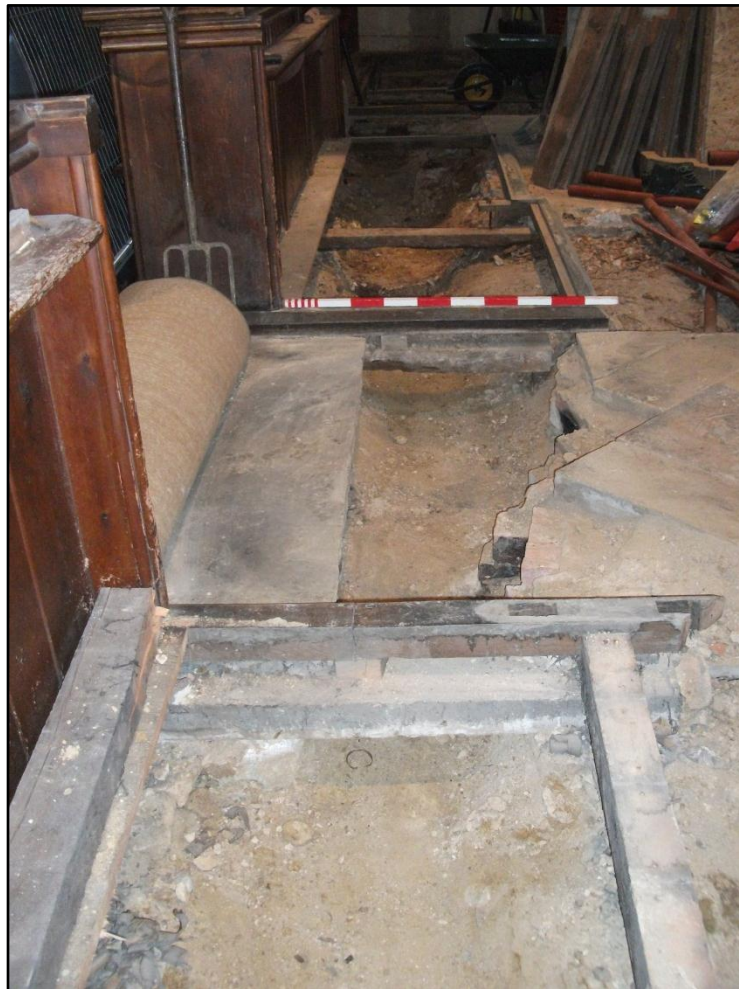


Brick-built flue, southern aisle Area C, looking west Fig 14

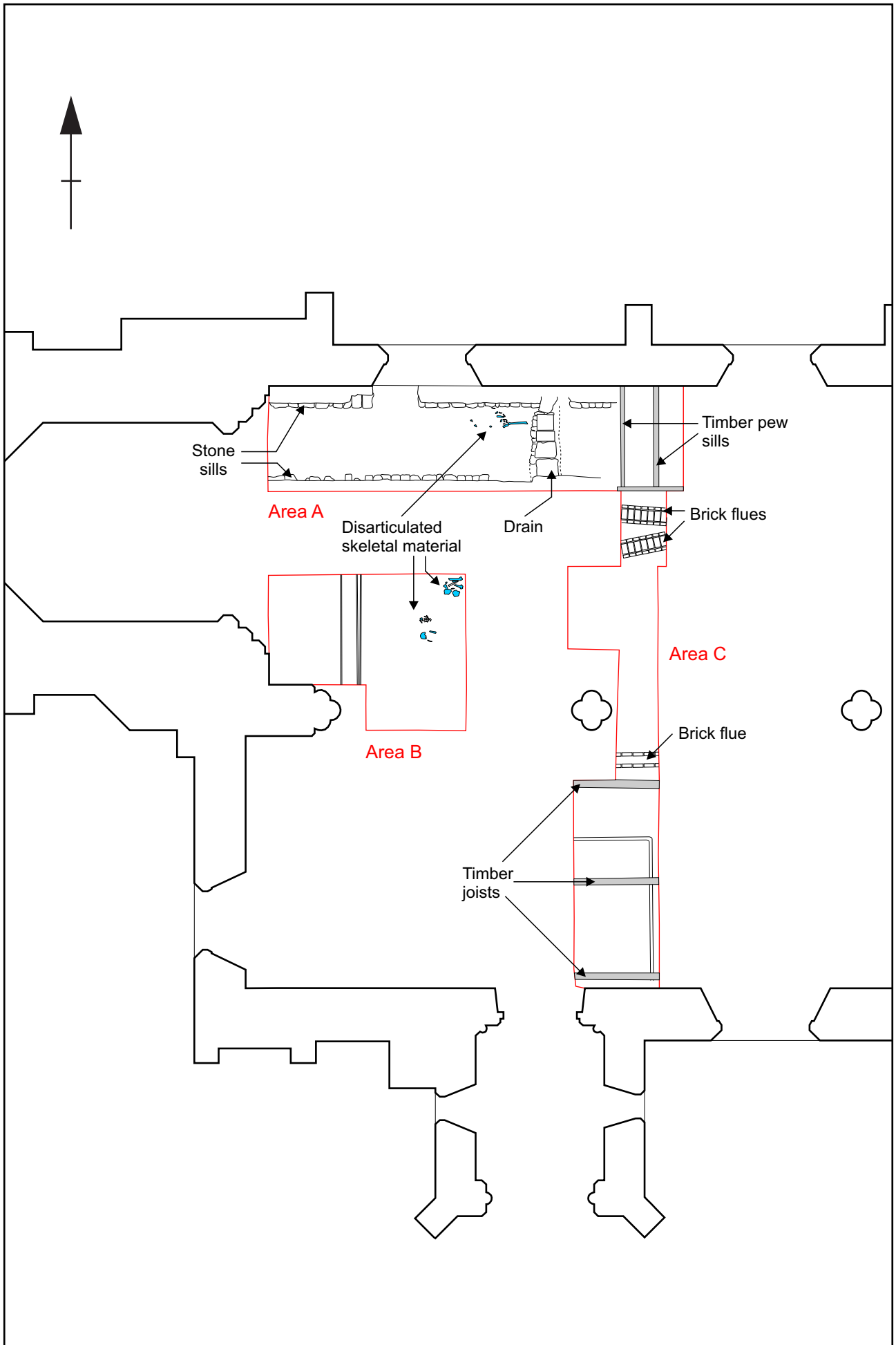




Sections of the brick flues, scale 1:25 Fig 15



Area C post-excavation, looking south Fig 16



Scale 1:100

Post-excavation plan of areas within church Fig 17

## 5 DISCUSSION

A programme of observation and investigation was undertaken in the Church of St Laurence in Stanwick during works to install a new heating system. Three areas of the church were subject to small interventions involving the lifting of floorboards or flagstones and excavation down to a depth of 0.20-0.35m. Human skeletal material was seen in all three areas. The remains were fragmentary and disarticulated, and comprised long bones, craniums, ribs, mandibles and pelvis fragments. The bones indicated an age range of adults, and at least one juvenile, were present. The condition of the bones suggests burials beneath the floor of the church had previously been disturbed by later interments or building alterations.

Earlier building features were identified including a stone-capped drain in Area B likely to be of medieval or post-medieval date, and Victorian-era brick-built flues in Area C from a former heating system. Timber joists for support of the pews were also seen in Areas B and C.

No other archaeological features were identified and no finds were recovered.

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### **Websites:**

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html>

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8th September 2015



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