



**Archaeological observation, investigation and
recording at the church of St Botolph,
Slapton, Northamptonshire
December 2016**

Report No 17/73

Author: Tim Sharman

Illustrator: Olly Dindol



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Author: Tim Sharman

Illustrator: Olly Dindol

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MOLA
Kent House
30 Billing House
Northampton
NN1 5DQ
01604 809 800
www.mola.org.uk
sparry@mola.org.uk

STAFF

Project Manager: Ant Maull Cert Arch

Text: Tim Sharman BA

Fieldwork: David J Leigh BA

Illustrations: Olly Dindol BSc

OAS/S REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1 - 287862	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the church of St Botolph, Slapton, Northamptonshire December 2016		
Short description	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording were carried out by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), during groundwork on land and at the church of St Botolph, Slapton, Northamptonshire. During the course of the work, the stone footings for the tower and the north aisle of the church were revealed.		
Project type	Watching Brief		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Churchyard		
Future work	None		
Monument type and period	Medieval church		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Parish church of St Botolph, Slapton Northamptonshire		
Easting Northing	SP 64012 46885		
Area (sq m/ha)	c0.9ha (church and churchyard)		
Height aOD	c 120m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA		
Project brief originator	Quinton Carroll		
Project Design originator	Stimpson Walton Bond		
Director/Supervisor	David Leigh (MOLA)		
Project Manager	Ant Maull (MOLA)		
Sponsor or funding body	Diocese of Peterborough		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	05/12/2016		
End date	22/12/2016		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical	ENN 108682		
Paper		Watching brief forms, plans, section drawings.	
Digital		Client report PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
	Unpublished client report		
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Archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the church of St Botolph, Slapton, Northamptonshire December 2016

Abstract

Archaeological observation, investigation and recording were carried out by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), during groundwork on land at the church of St Botolph, Slapton, Northamptonshire. During the course of the work, the stone footings for the tower and the north aisle of the church were revealed.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) had been commissioned by the Peterborough Diocesan Archaeological Adviser to carry out a programme of observation, investigation and recording of groundworks at the parish church of St Botolph, Slapton, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 64012 46885, Fig 1).

Faculty permission by the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Peterborough (dated 9th May 2016) had been given for the excavation of drainage trenches alongside the north walls of the aisle and north and west walls of the tower, the south and east walls of the Lady Chapel together with the south wall of the chancel.

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; DCLG 2012), a programme of archaeological works were undertaken to mitigate the effects of the works on the archaeological resource. A brief for the archaeological requirements was written by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (Carroll 2015). Works were undertaken in accordance with this brief and a Specification and Schedule of Works for the church of St Botolph, Slapton (Stimpson Walter Bond 2015)

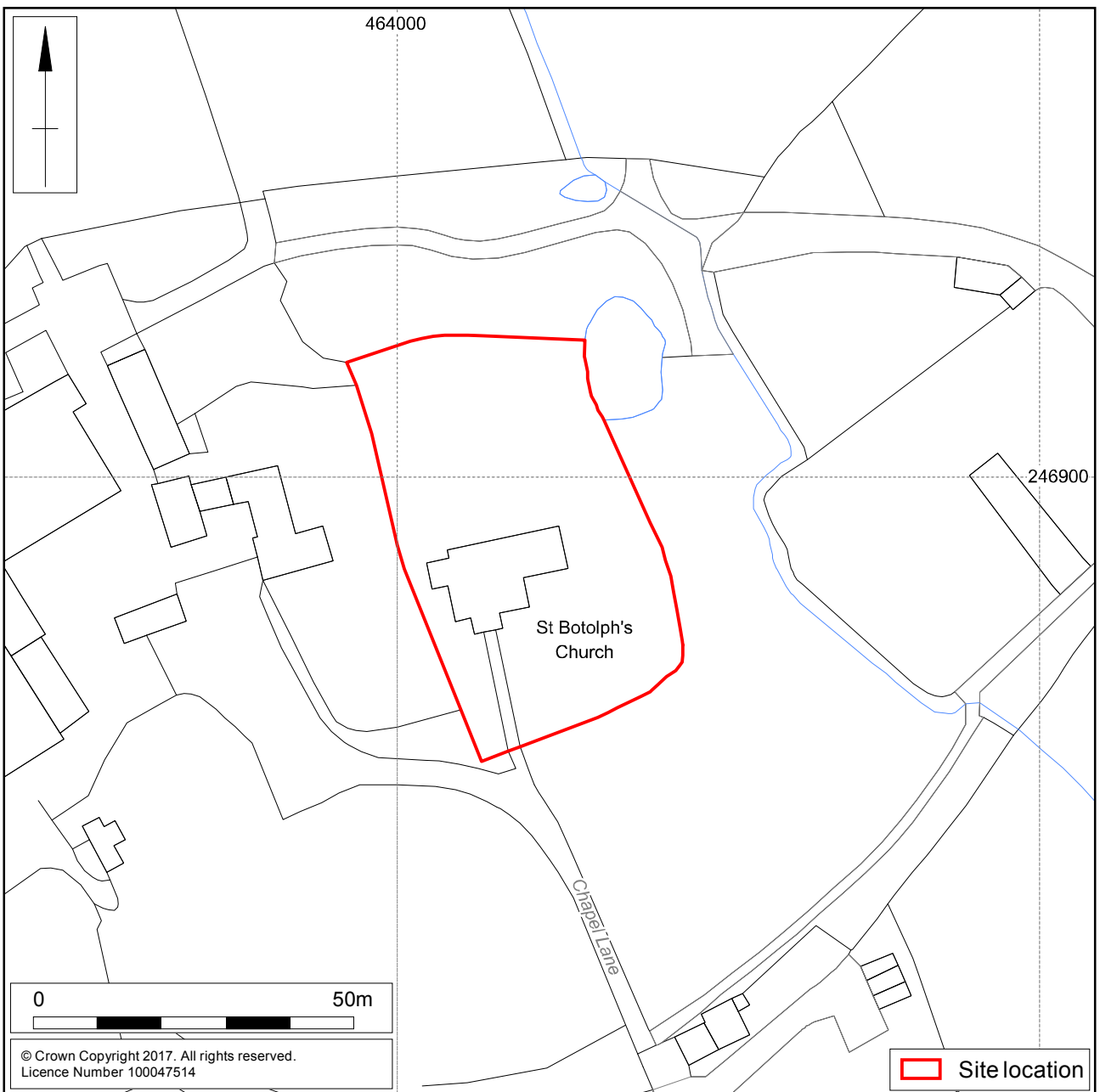
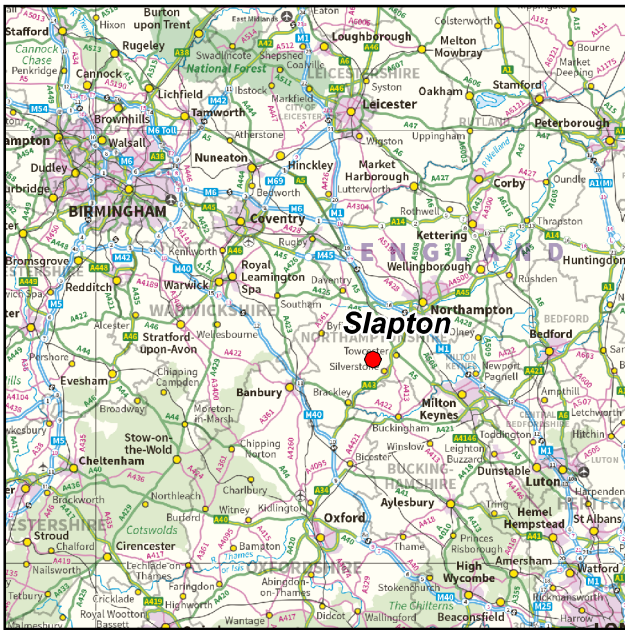
MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) registered organisation. This report has been prepared in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance: archaeological watching briefs* (CIfA 2014b) and the Historic England (HE) procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

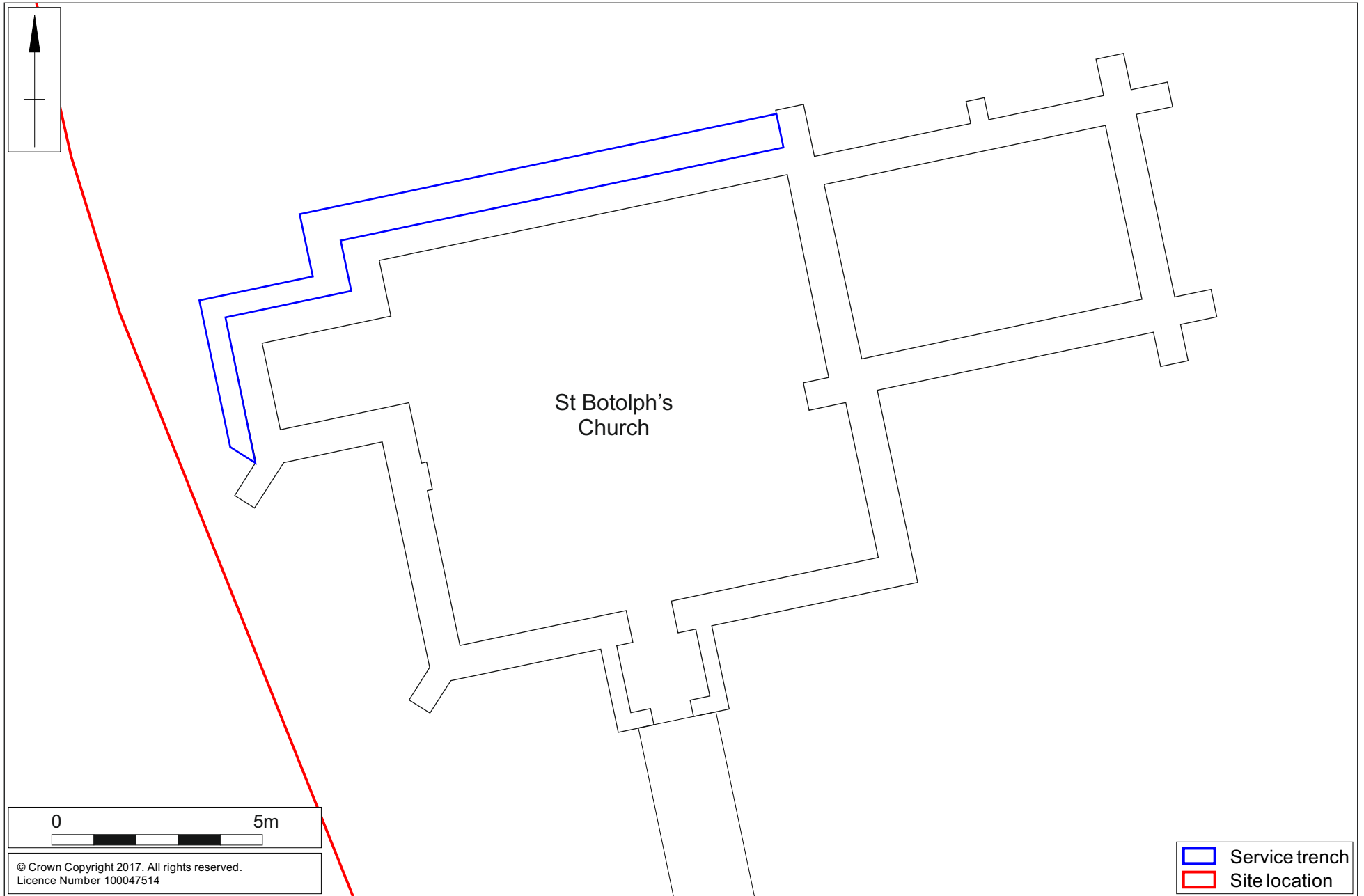
Slapton is the smallest village in the Whittlewood parishes, only a little over 260 hectares and lies to the north-west of the River Tove approximately 15 miles south-west of Northampton and five miles to the west of the former Roman town of Towcester (Lactodorum).

The high ground in the north-east is covered by Boulder Clay and Oolitic Limestone outcrop on the steep south-western and south-eastern facing slopes between 105 m. and 120 m above OD. Upper Lias Clay lies on the lower land close to the river (BGS 2017; AT 1983).



Scale 1:1000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:125

Area of archaeological observation Fig 2

The church and surrounding churchyard is situated in the highest point of the village at around 120m aOD occupying an area of c 0.9ha and is bounded to the north by a pond and open land, to the east and south by open land and to the west by buildings associated with Slapton Manor.

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

Medieval and later

In the Domesday Book of 1086, the village was recorded as having a manor and a total population of 10 people. However, by 1377 the population had increased as it was recorded that 60 people over the age of 14 had paid the Poll Tax.

The church dates from the 13th and 14th centuries. The south porch carries two scratch or mass dials that would have used to mark the time of the services. The chancel dates from the 14th century and has two tomb recesses of that date. The east window bears fragments of medieval glass, one of which is a shield with the arms of the Lucy family who most likely built the original church from about the year 1260 onwards. The blocked north doorway dates from the 13th century and the east wall of the nave is also 13th century. The chancel dates from the 14th century and has two tomb recesses of that date. The east window bears fragments of medieval glass, one of which is a shield with the arms of the Lucy family.

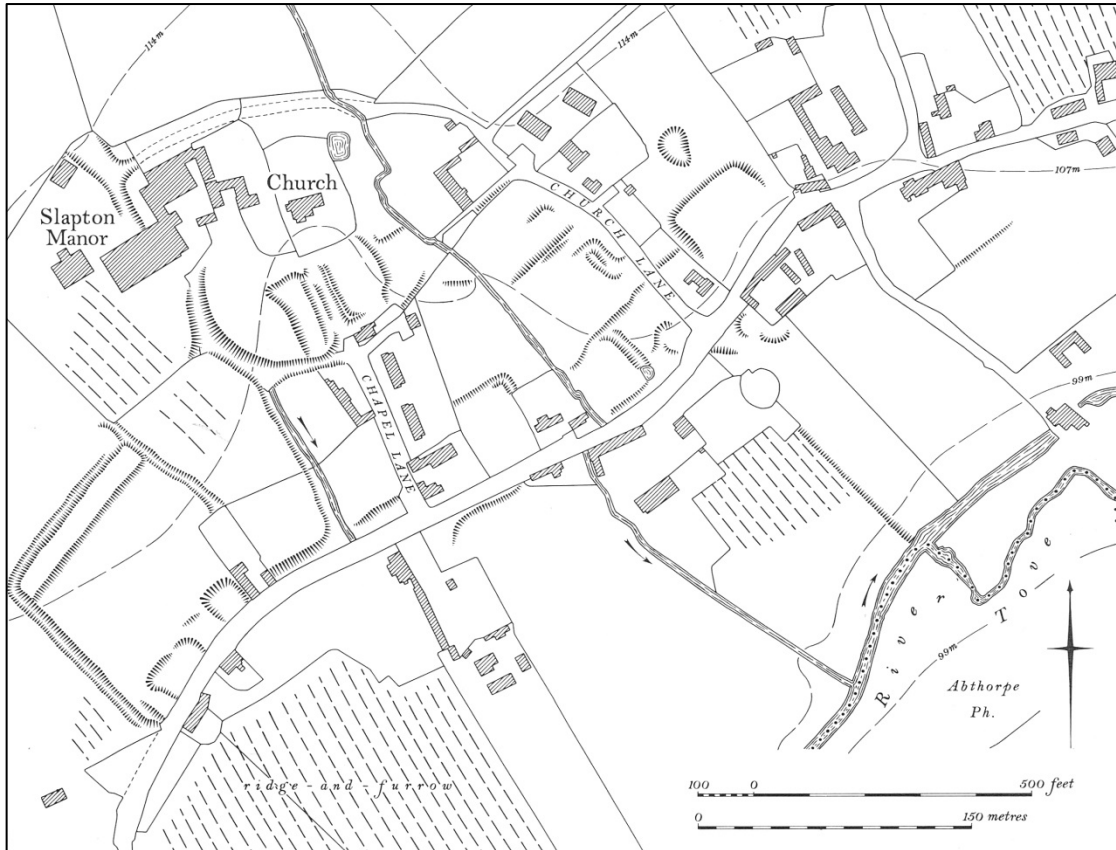
The interior contains some notable late medieval wall paintings all of which had been covered in limewash at the time of the Reformation until their rediscovery in the late 19th century. The largest of the wall paintings (located on the north wall of the nave) depicts a towering St Christopher with Christ child on his shoulder (Fig 8). In the south chapel is a painting showing St Eloi shoeing a horse, by removing a leg and leaving the horse supported by scaffolding. In 1875-83, the church was largely restored by William White. The work included a rebuild of the tower.

Medieval settlement remains, consisting mostly of earthworks centred on SP 640467, formerly part of Slapton, lie in and around the existing village. The surviving earthworks complement the existing pattern of streets and houses (RCHME; Fig 3). The greater part of the village is arranged along a single main street running north-east to south-west with many gaps between the existing buildings. In most of these gaps are fragmentary earthworks indicating that buildings stood there at some time. From this street two lanes extend N.W. towards the almost isolated St Botolph's church and manor house, standing on high ground. Until relatively recently these lanes ran on and encircled the church, churchyard and manor house; they remain as hollow-ways or public footpaths.

Immediately to the south of the church are at least four rectangular closes bounded by low scarps up to 1 m. high. These may only be abandoned paddocks, but they could be closes of houses formerly lining the old road to the south, part of which also survives as a hollow-way. Further east, along the south-west side of Church Lane are other closes, extending from the lane with, at their north-eastern ends, the remains of former buildings lining the lane.

It is unclear whether these earthworks represent a considerable reduction in village size (shrunken village) or are the result of changes in layout.

Much of the parish was subject to medieval ridge-and-furrow cultivation, which survives today above ground or is visible in aerial photographs.



Medieval earthworks and church of St Botolph (after RCHME 1982, 135) Fig 3

Just to the west of the churchyard is the grade II listed, 17th century Manor Farmhouse which is L-shaped in plan and is constructed of coursed square ironstone and limestone with a plain tiled roof.

At the southern end of the village is the grade II listed Slapton Lodge which dates to 1670 and is constructed of coursed squared limestone and ironstone blocks. There are later added wings to the building.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the area of groundworks the main objective of the investigation was to determine and understand the nature, function, and character of this archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting. Specific objectives were to:

- Mitigate the impact of the development through preservation by record;
- Identify, investigate and record any archaeological deposits or features exposed during the groundworks;
- Establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- Establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;

- Recovering artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- Recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions as an intrinsic part of the investigation.
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of fieldwork and analysis.

Specific research objectives were drawn from national and regional research frameworks as relevant depending upon the results of the work (Cooper 2006, updated by Knight *et al* 2012).

3.2 Methodology

The observation work took place on four separate occasions between 5th and 22nd of December 2016 in variable weather conditions, the area of observation, comprising an area of relatively flat land, within the churchyard, immediately to the north of the church, was excavated by the appointed contractors, under continuous archaeological supervision. The groundwork areas were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features, where present.

A linear trench, c17m long by 0.6m by wide by c1.2m deep was excavated immediately to the north of the nave, and the north and west walls of the tower (Fig 2). The quantity of proposed archaeological work undertaken was reduced (See section 1 for original proposal).

The topsoil, subsoil and natural substratum were stripped using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.6m bladed bucket.

Recording followed standard MOLA Northampton procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (MOLA 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. The photographic record comprises digital images.

All works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents Historic England's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance: Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA 2014b) and *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a). Methodology follows the Written Scheme of Investigation (Stimpson Walter Bond 2015).

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General stratigraphy

The natural substratum occurred at a depth of c0.8m below the current surface of the churchyard and mostly consisted of a mottled pale-mid reddish-brown ironstone and sand together with small amounts of clay (003). Overlying the natural substrate was a c0.45m deep layer of grey-black sandy loam (002) which may have been a deposit associated with the location of graves in the vicinity. The topsoil (001) consisted of a c0.3m deep layer of dark grey-brown sandy loam with a few small stone inclusions.

4.2 Archaeological features

The medieval wall footings of the tower were exposed below ground surface (Fig 4). It consisted of approximately nine courses of roughly dressed limestone blocks c1m deep with a 0.25m offset on the lowermost courses which rested directly on the natural layer (003).

The medieval footings of the nave were exposed below ground surface (Figs 4, 5) and consisted of six courses of roughly dressed medium-sized limestone blocks c0.6m deep with large limestone or ironstone blocks at the north-west corner. The lowermost courses of the footings were offset from the wall by a width of 0.25m. Beneath the lowermost footing course, was a 0.32m deep layer of grey-brown sandy loam with charcoal flecks and small stone inclusions (004).



Footings of north-western corner of tower, looking south-east Fig 4

During the observation work an opportunity was taken to record a blocked doorway on the north wall of the nave (Figs 7, 8). Externally the doorway measured 1.7m high by 0.84 wide and internally it measured 2.2m high by 0.94m wide. The external stone door frame had been removed and the void between had been filled with coursed limestone blocks.



Footings of north-western corner of tower, looking east Fig 5



Footings of nave's northern wall, looking east Fig 6



Blocked doorway, north wall of nave, looking south Fig 7



Blocked doorway and wall painting showing St Christopher, looking north Fig 8

5 DISCUSSION

Although the scope of the original works was reduced, the excavation of the drainage trench on the north side of the church has revealed the nature of the footings of the tower and the north wall of the nave. The layer found beneath the footings of the nave, may be indicative of an earlier, buried soil layer or alternatively it may be associated with the construction of the church. Otherwise no archaeological features or finds were revealed during the excavation of the drainage trench.

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MOLA Northampton

20 June 2017

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Area	Length, width & alignment			
Site	Drainage Trench: 17m long x 0.6m wide east to west			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts
001	Layer	Dark grey-brown sandy loam with a few small stone inclusions	0.3m thick	-
002	Layer	Grey-black sandy loam	0.45m thick	-
003	Layer	Mottled pale-mid brown sand and ironstone natural	At least 0.5m thick	-
004	Layer	Grey-brown sandy loam with occasional charcoal flecks and small stone inclusions	0.32m thick	-



MOLA
Kent House
30 Billing Road
Northampton
NN1 5DQ
01604 809 800
www.mola.org.uk
sparry@mola.org.uk