



Archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the church of St George the Martyr Wootton, Northamptonshire

Report No 17/105

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Illustrator: Joanne Clawley



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recording at the church of St George the Martyr
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1 - 293695	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the Church of St George the Martyr, Wootton, Northamptonshire		
Short description	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording were carried out by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) during groundwork on land at the church of St George the Martyr, Wootton, Northamptonshire. During the course of the work at least two possible medieval grave cuts were noted within a service trench in the churchyard. Fragmentary, redeposited human remains were also noted in excavations under the floor at the west side of the nave where a 19th century underfloor heating system was exposed.		
Project type	Watching Brief		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Church and churchyard		
Future work	None		
Monument type and period	Medieval church		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Parish church of St George the Martyr, Wootton, Northamptonshire		
Easting Northing	SP 76240 56530		
Area (sq m/ha)	c0.07ha		
Height aOD	c93m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA		
Project brief originator	Quinton Carroll		
Project Design originator	Stimpson Walton Bond		
Director/Supervisor	David Leigh and Tim Sharman (MOLA)		
Project Manager	Ant Maull (MOLA)		
Sponsor or funding body	Diocese of Peterborough		
PROJECT DATE			
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End date	June 2017		
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Paper		Watching brief forms, plans, section drawings.	
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BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Unpublished client report			
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Archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the Church of St George the Martyr, Wootton, Northamptonshire

Abstract

Archaeological observation, investigation and recording were carried out by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) during groundwork on land at the church of St George the Martyr, Wootton, Northamptonshire. During the course of the work at least two possible medieval grave cuts were noted within a service trench in the churchyard. Fragmentary, redeposited human remains were also noted in excavations under the floor at the west side of the nave where a 19th-century underfloor heating system was exposed.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was 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 George the Martyr, Wootton, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 76240 56530, Fig 1).

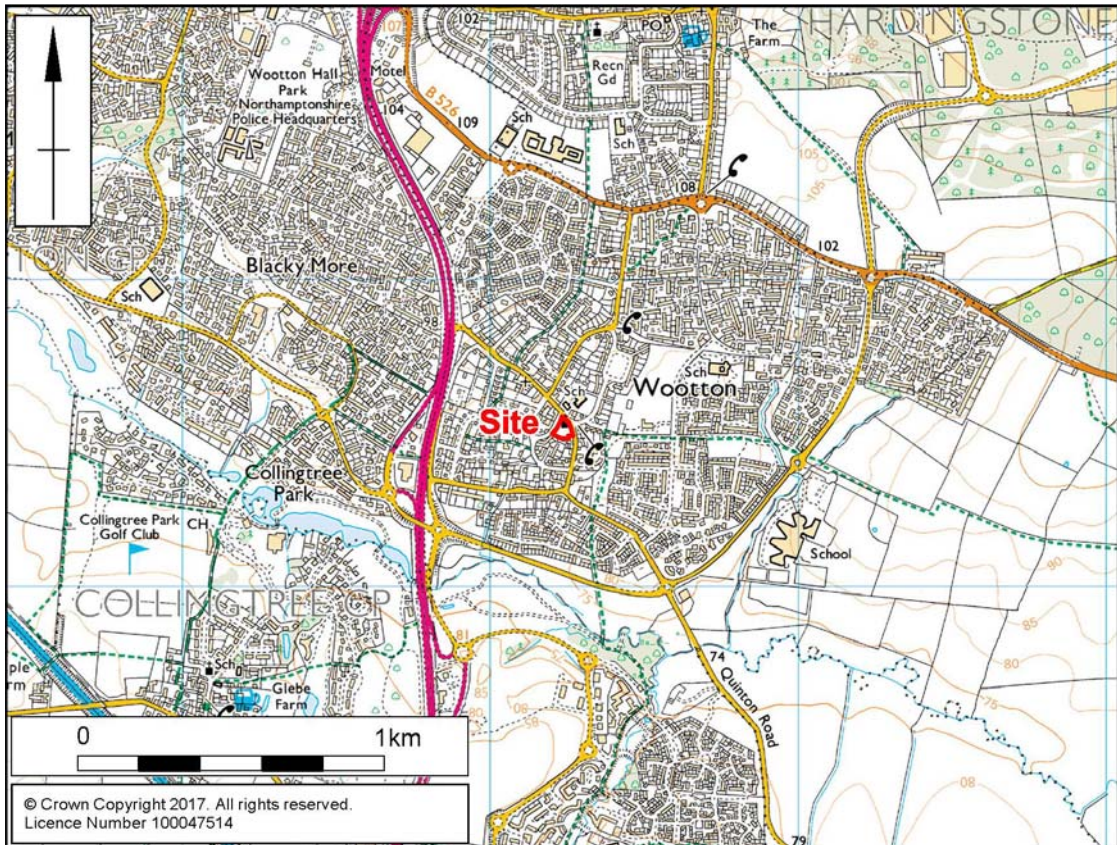
Faculty permission by the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Peterborough (dated 6th September 2016) had been given to install a server and WC into the church, to modify the tower screen, and to deal with dry and wet rot in accordance with a specification.

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 the *Specification and Schedule of Works* for the church of St George the Martyr, Wootton (Stimpson Walter Bond 2015)

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

The village of Wootton is located on the south-eastern side and within the borough of Northampton (Fig 1). The church of St George the Martyr is located within the centre of the village at a height of approximately 93m aOD. The underlying geology comprises mudstones of the Rutland Formation, shelly limestone and calcareous mudstone of the Wellinborough Member type and Stamford Member interbedded sandstone and siltstones (BGS 2017).



Site location Fig 1

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The church of St George the Martyr is a Grade I Listed Building (NHLE ID: 1293986) and is largely constructed of limestone with some ironstone dressings. The tower is largely constructed of ironstone and dates to 14th century. The nave and aisles date to the 13th century. The chancel was altered in the 15th century. The church has a south porch. On the north side of the nave there is a large blocked Gothic doorway. William Butterfield carried out restoration work in 1865.

Prehistoric

A geophysical survey, approximately 600m to the south of the church, on land close to Wooldale Road (SP 764 559), revealed evidence for a possible late Bronze Age or early Iron Age pit alignment. An enclosure of possibly Iron Age date was also revealed (Meadows and Walford 2015).

Roman

A Romano-British villa was discovered in 1999 during development work on land at Curtlee Hill, approximately 0.5km to the south-west (SP 76658 56279). Excavation work on the site from 1999 to 2002 revealed a small corridor villa with an associated precinct overlying an earlier sub-rectangular enclosure dating to the mid-first century AD. The site was occupied from the first to the fourth centuries AD (Chapman and Thorne 2004; Chapman *et al* 2005).

Saxon

Excavation work at the Curtlee Hill site revealed a few sherds of early Saxon pottery and a single Saxon inhumation dating to the mid seventh century AD (Chapman and Thorne 2004; Chapman *et al* 2004).

Medieval and later

Evidence for medieval ridge and furrow farming has been found on the outskirts of the village, including the Wootton Fields area, in the Wooldale Road area, approximately 0.5km to the south.

Several listed, post-medieval houses survive in the village in the vicinity of the church. The remains of a post-medieval tower mill survive approximately 0.4km to the north-west.

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 a number of separate occasions between October 2016 and June 2017 in variable weather conditions. The areas of observation comprised the excavation of a linear service trench c30m long by 0.3m by wide and c1m deep mostly located parallel with and c0.5m to the east of, the western wall of the churchyard. An area c60 sq m, was also excavated within the west end of the nave (Figs 2 and 3).

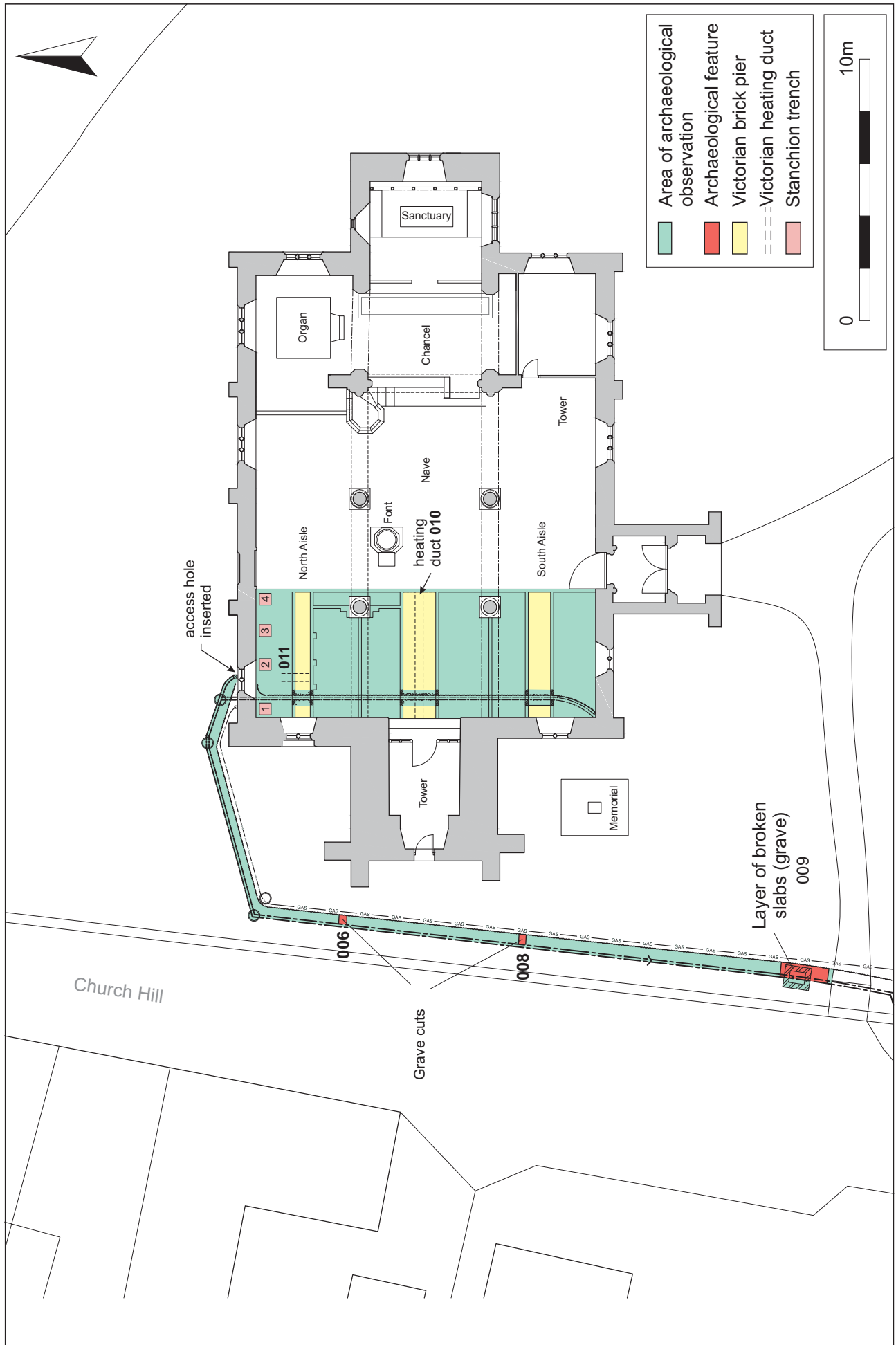
The groundwork areas were excavated by the appointed contractors under continuous archaeological supervision and were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features, where present.

Within the churchyard, the topsoil, subsoil and natural substratum were stripped using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.3m bladed bucket. Within the church, excavation works were carried out by hand.

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).

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' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and Guidance: archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014b), as well as the Historic England (HE) procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015).



Scale 1:200

Areas of archaeological observation Fig 2

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General stratigraphy

The natural substratum occurred at a depth of c0.9m below the current surface of the churchyard and consisted of an orange red-brown ironstone and sand (003). At the southern end of the trench it consisted of grey blue-brown silty clay (004). Overlying the natural substrate was a 0.7m deep layer of pale grey-brown sandy loam subsoil (002). The topsoil (001) consisted of a 0.15m deep, dark grey-brown loam.

4.2 Archaeological features

The external service trench

Two grave cuts [006] and [008] were noted during the excavation of the service trench, at a depth of 1m (Figs 2 and 4). The fills (005) and (007) respectively, were similar and consisted of a mottled dark grey-brown, sandy loam with patches of red-brown sandy loam. Fragments of human bone were noted *in situ*. Within fill (005), the remains of a human skull were noted at the base of the grave cut (Fig 4).

Close to the southern end of the service trench a layer of re-deposited, broken grave slabs was noted (009) (Figs 2 and 5).

The church interior

Within the church interior, at the western end of the nave and the north and south aisles, the pews and the underlying floor boards and supporting joists were removed. An access hole measuring 0.5m wide by 0.46m high was drilled through the footings of the north wall of the church approximately 0.6m to the east of the internal north-western corner of the church (Fig 6). The church wall footing was found to be 0.73m wide at this point. It was also noted that a c0.4m high, pre-modern (possibly 19th-century) brick offset had been constructed against the base of the north wall of the church (Figs 6, 9 and 10). The offset had been constructed to support the wooden floor joists on the north side of the church.

From the new access hole in the north church wall, uPVC service pipes were laid in voids beneath the pews, across the width of the church in a north to south direction. The line of the service pipes cut across three 19th-century tiled walkways aligned east to west between the rows of pews. Three sections were cut across the walkways to provide access for the new service pipes. The walkways were revealed to be free standing, with linear brick piers for the timber floor joists (Fig 2). All three brick piers were c0.5m high, though with variable widths of 1.05m, 1.48m and 1.10m for the northern, central and southernmost piers respectively. The construction of the piers consisted of five courses of bricks with a brick capping upon which ceramic tiles had been laid. The cores of the piers were a compacted soil consisting mostly of a pale to mid-grey brown sandy loam with fragments of mortar and charcoal (Fig 7).

Running along the centre of the central brick pier, in an east to west direction was a brick-lined heating duct [010] (Fig 8). The duct was c0.4m high with an internal width of 0.26m and was capped with an iron lattice grate. Another duct [011] ran north-south towards a square hole in the north wall of the church (Fig 10), just to the east of the new access hole.

Just inside the north wall of the church, four stanchion trenches were excavated. Each trench was 0.5m square by 0.2m deep. Some re-deposited human bones were noted within some of the trenches and were left *in situ* (Figs 9 and 10)

5 DISCUSSION

Excavations within the churchyard revealed two grave cuts c1m below present ground level, possibly medieval in date, containing fragmentary human remains. At nearby Little Billing, late Saxon to modern burials at All Saints Church were found to survive largely between 1.1m and 1.3m below ground level (Chinnock 2014; Chinnock in press). A medieval or later date could therefore not be unreasonable to suggest at Wootton. Redeposited broken grave slabs were also noted within the service trench.

Within the church several of the wall footings were revealed and recorded, and a 19th-century under-floor heating system was also exposed and recorded.



Service trench looking west Fig 3



Grave cut [006], looking east Fig 4



Layer of re-deposited, broken grave slabs (009), looking north Fig 5



Access hole cut through north wall footings, looking north Fig 6



Section across southernmost brick pier, looking north-west Fig 7



Victorian heating duct [010], looking east Fig 8



Stanchion trenches and [011], looking west Fig 9



North wall, heating duct [011] and stanchion trenches, looking south Fig 10

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MOLA Northampton

August 2017

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Area	Length, width & alignment			
Site	Drainage Trench: 30m long x 0.3m wide x 1m deep, mostly aligned east to west			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts
001	Layer	Dark grey brown loam topsoil	0.15m thick	-
002	Layer	Pale grey-brown sandy loam subsoil	0.7m thick	-
003	Layer	Orange red-brown ironstone and sand natural	At least 0.05m thick	-
004	Layer	Grey blue-brown silty clay natural	At least 0.05m thick	-
005	Fill of grave	Mottled dark grey-brown, sandy loam with human bone	c1m thick	-
[006]	Grave cut	Vertical sided grave cut	c1m deep	-
007	Fill of grave	Mottled dark grey-brown, sandy loam with human bone	c1m thick	-
[008]	Grave cut	Vertical sided grave cut	c1m deep	-
009	layer	Layer of broken grave slabs	At least 0.1m thick	-

Area	Length, width & alignment			
Site	Trench in Church interior: c13m long x c5m wide, north to south			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts
[010]	Structure	Brick lined heating duct	0.26m wide x 0.4m high	-
[011]	Structure	Brick lined heating duct	0.26m wide x 0.4m high	-



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