



**Report On An Archaeological Watching Brief At St. Mary's Church,
Washington, West Sussex**

June 2012

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This document sets out the results from an archaeological watching Brief at St. Mary's Church, Washington, West Sussex carried out by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. on behalf of the PCC of St. Mary's Church. The watching brief was carried out in July 2009 and April/May 2012. The foundation of the original wall dividing the nave from the chancel and the remains of an historic floor surface within the tower were revealed, together with the partial remains of four inhumations within the churchyard.

BACKGROUND

Topographical Background



Figure 1 Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

1. St. Mary's Church lies on the west side of the village of Washington, which lies 3.5km to the east of the centre of Storrington in West Sussex, immediately adjacent to the A24. The church sits at the foot of the South Downs, at 76.5m aOD and grid reference TQ11871286. The underlying geology is upper greensand.

Project Background

1. The PCC of St. Mary's Church, Washington, obtained a faculty to undertake internal re-ordering works within the church, including the laying of a new floor in the nave, aisles and tower, and the construction of an external extension for WC facilities, with associated service trenches. The internal works required the removal of the current church floor and the lowering of levels within the tower and at the east and west ends of the nave. The faculty included a requirement for the carrying out of an archaeological watching brief while these works were undertaken.
2. West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. (WSA) was appointed by the PCC of St. Mary's Church to carry out the archaeological watching brief. A Written Scheme of Investigation, approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee's Archaeologist, Vivienne Coad, drawn up by WSA set out the methodology used in order to fulfil the terms of the condition (WSA 2012).

3. This report details the results of the archaeological watching brief, which was carried out in two phases, the first on the 9th July 2009 (Sandham Tomb & services connection) and the second from 19th April – 1st May 2012 (all other works), by George Anelay of West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. The project archive will be deposited with West Sussex Records Office.

Historical Background

1. The church of St. Mary (the dedication is recorded as early as 1146) is built of ashlar, and has a chancel, aisled nave with south porch, and west tower. The early history of the fabric has been largely obscured by the rebuilding of everything except the tower and the north arcade in the 19th century. The north arcade is of c. 1200 and presumably indicates that a north aisle was added at that time; it was partly reworked in the 13th century. The tower is late-15th or early-16th century, and replaced an earlier tower at the west end of the north aisle, part of which survived in 1865 as a staircase. There may also have been a chapel for the chantry which was dissolved c. 1548, but of which no other record has been found. The chancel was described in 1636 as about to fall down, but in 1724 was said to be again in good repair. It was rebuilt apparently in the 18th century, and galleries were put up in the nave at some time before 1865. After a change of vicars in that year the church was extensively restored in 1866–7 by G. M. Hills in a 13th-century style. The nave and chancel were rebuilt, the south aisle added, and the north aisle widened by 2 ft (VCH p.247-259)..

RESULTS

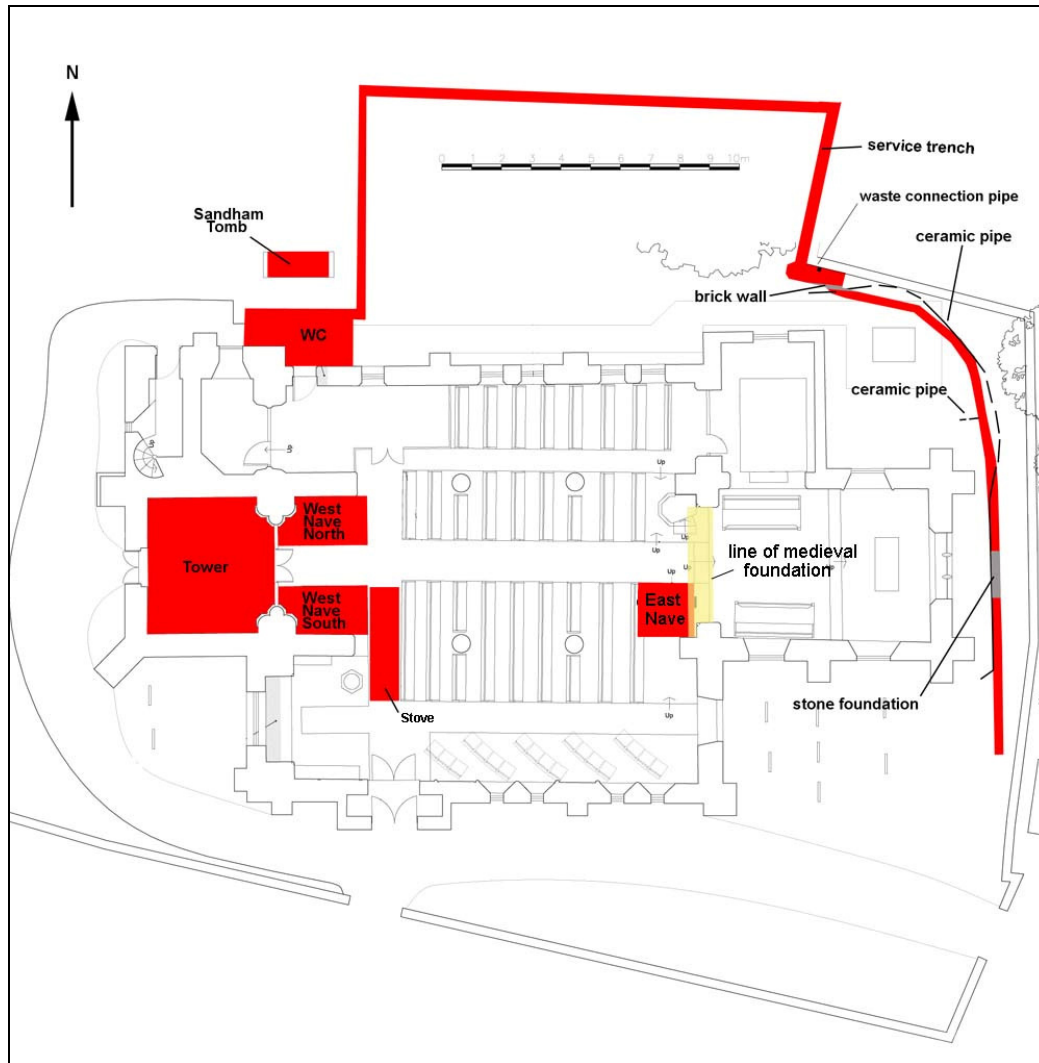


Figure 2 Plan of the church showing the location of all the trenches.

External

Sandham Tomb

1. On the 9th July 2009 a small trench was opened up between the tomb to the Sandham family and the north wall of the church, in the location of the proposed WC extension. The purpose of the trench was to determine how far the underground portions of the tomb extended beyond that of the above-ground chest tomb. It was discovered that below the chest tomb lay a large brick-lined grave projecting 1m beyond it to the south, its southern edge being only 1.9m from the church wall.



Figure 3 The Sandham Chest Tomb and the part of the underlying arched brick-lined grave, looking north. The scale is 1m.

2. A brick was removed from its arched roof which revealed that six coffins were within, in two layers of three. The overall depth of the grave was about six feet. Where discernable the coffins consisted of an outer box of wood and an inner of lead. The entrance to the tomb was probably from the west, the bricks at this end showing clear evidence of a blocked opening. The panels on the chest tomb record seven individuals, all members of the Sandham family, six of which were interred below, while the seventh was buried in South Africa. There are eight panels on the tomb, three on each long side and two at either end, they are inscribed as follows (clockwise from the east end):

1. Capt. G. Sandham, son of Lt. General Sandham of Rowdell and Mary his wife. Born 21st Sept 1847, died 31st March 1879. Buried at Kambula, Zululand.
2. Major Charles Herriman Sandham of Rowdell. Born 12th October 1782, died 14th February 1869.
3. Rev. Charles Herriman Sandham, son of Major C.H. Sandham and Maria his wife. Born 17th June 1816, died 3rd July 1846.
4. Maria, wife of Major Charles Herriman Sandham of Rowdell. Born 1st November 1792, died 20th July 1840.
5. Mary Georgiana, wife of Lt. General Sandham of Rowdell. Born 25th October 1820, died 3rd September 1880.
6. General George Sandham Kt [?] of Rowdell. Born April 18th 1815, died January 29th 1887.
7. Charles Henry Sandham of Rowdell. Born August 29th 1856, died November 21st 1892.
8. This panel is blank.

WC Trench

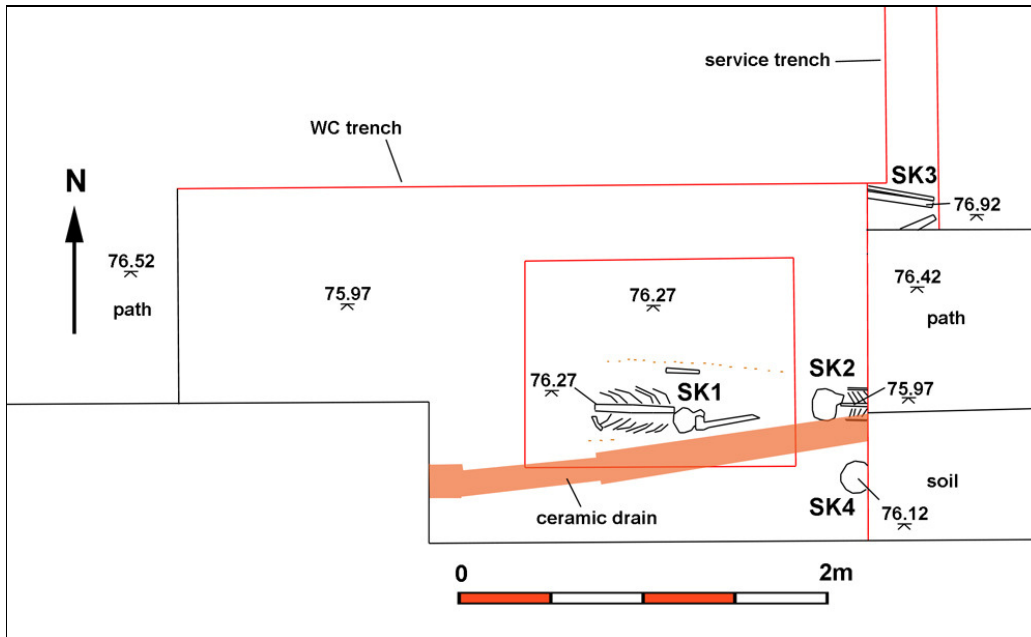


Figure 4 Plan of the WC extension trench.

1. The extension trench for the WC was excavated on the 19th and 20th April 2012. The depth of the trench was only 0.45m below the existing path surface, rising to only 0.15m in the raised central section. For this reason few burials were revealed, the majority lying at a deeper level, as was indicated by the disturbed nature of the soil throughout.
2. SK 1 was discovered only 0.15m below the extant path and as a result its left leg, the left side of its pelvis and part of its left arm were disturbed during the excavations. It has also suffered some historic damage, with its head and right arm having been removed, the former presumably by a later burial and the latter by a ceramic drain. The edge of the coffin was indicated by two parallel lines of iron studs or nails. One of these lines was noted for the length of the surviving portions of the skeleton on its north side, truncated to the east by SK2 and to the west by a deeper burial. The southern line was only visible at the skeleton's west end, being removed by the ceramic drain trench further to the east. These studs/ nails are likely to have been used to pin a fabric covering to the coffin.



Figure 5 The WC trench after excavation, looking south. The scale is 2m.

3. Only the head and upper chest of SK2 lay with the excavated trench. It had apparently removed the lower legs and feet of SK1 when interred and lay at the base of the trench 0.45m below the extant path. SK3 lay within the south end of the service trench, which ran north from the WC trench. This trench was excavated to a depth of 0.7m, but only this one skeleton was found. Only the lower legs of SK3 were seen within the trench and they lay 0.5m below the extant path. SK4 was represented by only the upper part of the skull, lying at 0.3m below the path.
4. All the human remains were re-buried within the churchyard.

Service Trench

1. A 0.4m square trench was excavated on 9th July 2009 against the churchyard wall, in order to insert a waste connection pipe through to the neighbouring property. This extended to a depth of 0.85m, but encountered only disturbed soils. On the 24th and 30th April 2012 a service trench, 0.7m deep, was excavated connecting this waste pipe with the WC extension and continuing round the east end of the church to connect up with the mains water. The route of this service trench was deliberately chosen in order to avoid burials and in this it was successful, encountering only SK3, described above.
2. No remains of any description, save the disturbed soils of the graveyard and an armoured electric cable, were encountered until the trench had passed to the east of the waste connection pipe. Here, at a

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distance of 0.55m from the existing flint churchyard wall and at a depth of 0.7m below the existing surface, were the remains of a brick wall running east-west. Since it lay at the base of the service trench little of this wall was seen, but it is possible that it was an earlier retaining wall for the churchyard, of unknown date.



Figure 6 Left of centre are the remains of the brick retaining wall at the base of the trench, looking south-east. The scale is divided into 0.5m sections.

3. As the service trench bent around the east end of the church, a ceramic pipe was encountered which appeared to follow broadly the same course, crossing the trench at several points. This may be connected with one of the earlier heating systems within the church.
4. As the service trench passed the east window of the current chancel, a stone foundation was revealed at a depth of 0.3 - 0.5m below the existing ground surface. It was composed of undressed upper greensand blocks set in a yellow mortar. It had been badly damaged by previous disturbance, particularly by the ceramic pipe noted above. It was c.1.5m wide and appeared to be running east-west. It is not known what this may represent or to what period it can be assigned. It clearly pre-dates the ceramic pipe, which is likely to be 19th or early 20th century and probably pre-dates the AD1866 chancel, since it would seem too close. Its proximity to the churchyard boundary, the other side of which is considerably lower, would suggest it did not extend far in that direction. A possible explanation is that it is the base for an earlier monument, demolished when the chancel was extended in the 19th century.



Figure 7 The stone foundation looking east. The scale is 2m.

Internal

1. The laying of the new floor within the nave, aisles and tower in large part re-used the existing spaces beneath the extant pew platforms. However at the east end of the nave (on the south side of the central aisle), at the west end of the nave and within the tower the ground below the pews needed to be lowered further. In these locations the reduction in ground level was carried out by the archaeologist.

East end of the Nave

1. A small 'L'-shaped trench was excavated at the east end of the nave, to the south of the central aisle, on 10th May 2012 for a new sleeper wall. Below a 0.15m layer of white mortar rubble associated with the Victorian floors was a layer of dark brown soil of unknown depth. Through this had been cut a 0.9m wide wall foundation running north-south and composed of Upper Greensand rubble set in red sand with an overlying skim of yellow mortar. This foundation had been in turn cut to the north by a brick wall, which ran east-west, under the central aisle of the nave and on under the chancel floor.
2. The stone wall foundation is likely to be that supporting the original medieval wall dividing the nave and chancel, which was demolished as part of the 19th century alterations. The brick wall which has cut through this is probably linked to an earlier heating system within the church, since it would only have been inserted after the medieval chancel arch had been demolished, making it too late in date to be a brick-lined grave.

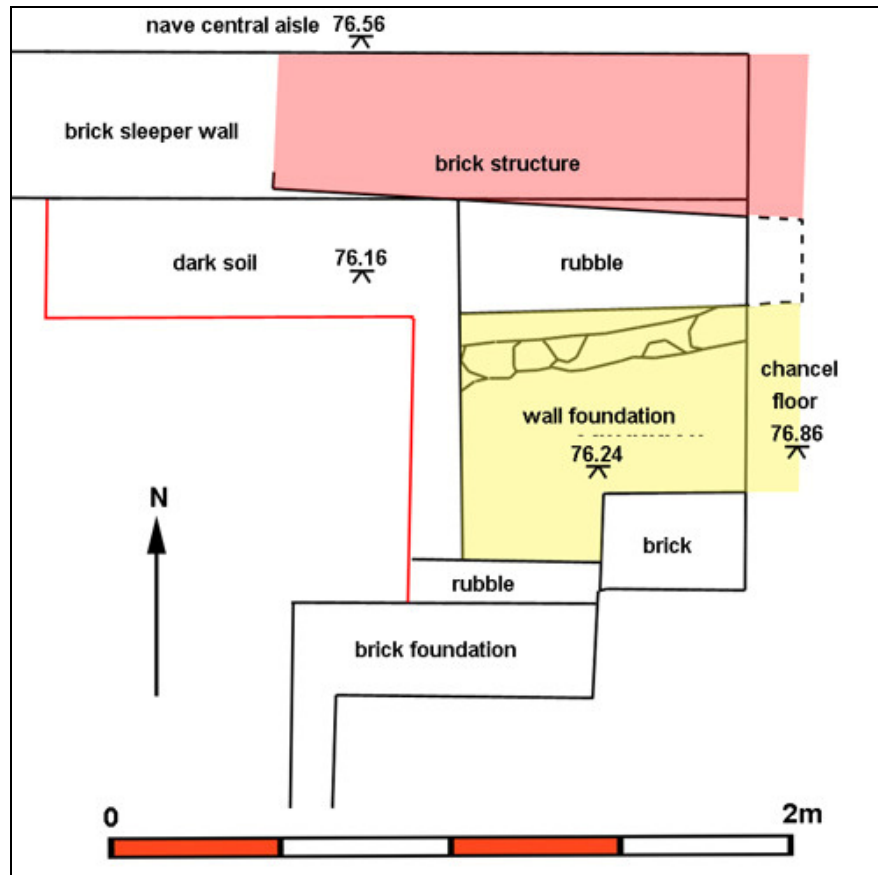


Figure 8 The trench at the east end of the nave.



Figure 9 The trench at the east end of the nave, looking south. The medieval wall foundation is to the left of the image. The scale is in 0.5m divisions.



Figure 10 Tibia and Fibula found in the trench at the east end of the nave.

1. Within the backfill of the trench cut through the wall foundation for the brick structure were found the disarticulated fused tibia and fibula of a human leg. These showed clear signs of a major double fracture which had subsequently healed, with the upper parts of both bones having slipped c.5cm down and the whole fusing together.

West end of the Nave

1. The ground surface below the pew platforms at the west end of the nave proved to be too shallow for the proposed new floor, therefore, on the 19th and 20th April 2012, it was reduced in both.
2. The northern trench contained the same white mortar rubble, overlying all earlier deposits, found throughout the church, however here it did not present a level surface, its surface at the western end being 0.22m higher than at the east. At the eastern end of the trench a rubble filled hole was recorded in the mortar layer, extending to the east where some damaged brickwork was visible. This may be associated with an earlier church heating system or a brick-lined grave.

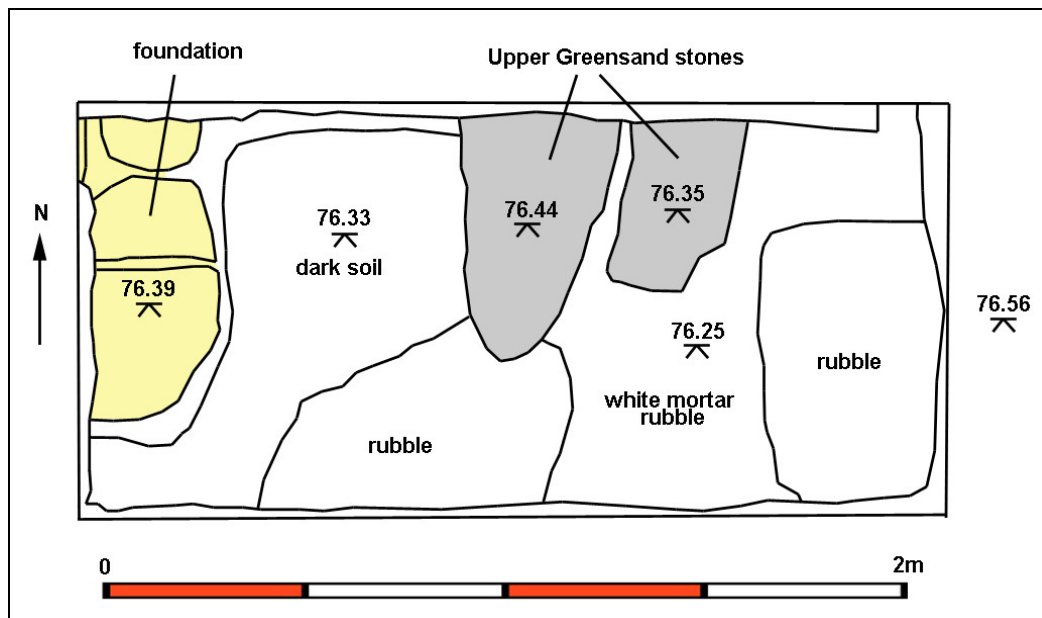


Figure 11 The trench below the pew platform at the west end of the nave on the north side of the central aisle.

3. The white mortar layer was removed only in the trench's western half, in order to reach the required depth, revealing the stone foundation to the existing church tower at its western end. This was composed of undressed Upper Greensand blocks set in white mortar. It had been dug into the same dark soil found elsewhere under the church floors, although here the soil's surface was compacted hard. This dark soil had been cut to the east by a pit filled with brick rubble and by another feature partially filled with two large undressed Upper Greensand blocks. These stones may represent a second wall foundation running north-south, but this was not clear from the limited amount of excavation undertaken.



Figure 12 The trench below the pew platform at the west end of the nave on the north side of the central aisle, looking north. The scale is 2m.

4. The southern trench contained the same white mortar rubble, overlying all earlier deposits, found throughout the church, and with the same slope as found in the northern trench. Once again, because of this slope, the white mortar layer was only removed in the trench's western half, in order to reach the required depth. Below the mortar, at the western end of the trench, was again the stone foundation to the church tower dug into the dark soil.

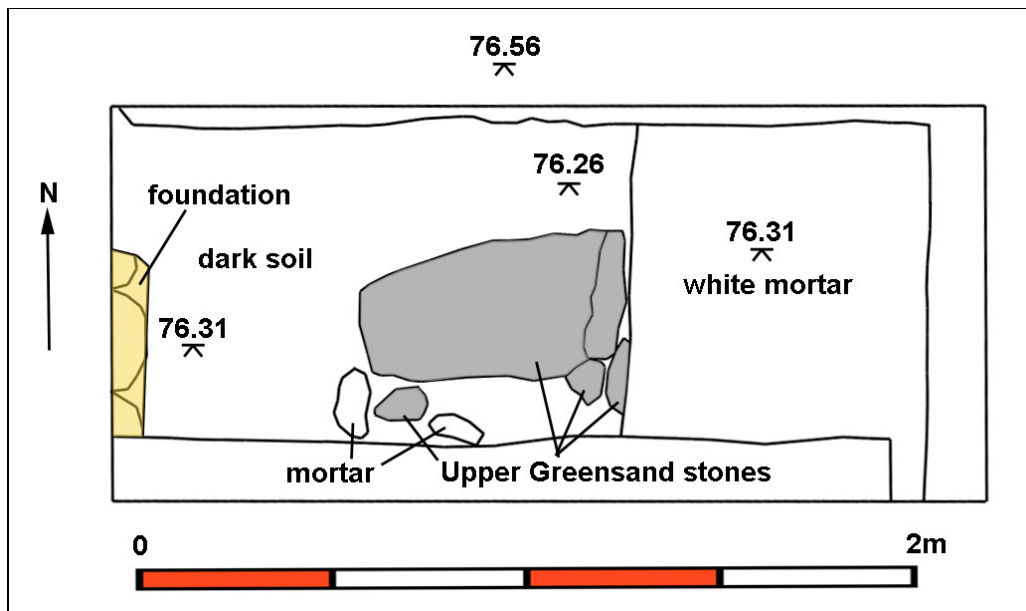


Figure 13 The trench below the pew platform at the west end of the nave on the south side of the central aisle.

5. Towards the centre of the trench the dark soil layer contained a large Upper Greensand stone, together with several smaller. It is possible that this relates to the possible wall foundation found in the centre of the northern trench, however the alignment does not quite match and they may just be loose stones.



Figure 14 The trench below the pew platform at the west end of the nave on the south side of the central aisle, looking south. The scale is 2m.

Tower

1. The ground surface below the two pew platforms in the tower proved to be too shallow for the proposed new floor, therefore between the 19th and 24th April 2012 it was reduced in both.
2. The northern trench contained the usual white mortar rubble, overlying all earlier deposits, found throughout the church. Just to the east of the centre of this trench a shallow rectangular hole (0.45m x 0.17m x 0.05m deep) had been made in the white mortar within which were the remains of a wooden post. Below this mortar was a thin layer of red sand, over a 0.1m thick layer of crushed Upper Greensand, which in turn sat upon the dark brown soil found elsewhere beneath the church floor. Dug through all these layers were two pits, one in each corner, both c.0.45m in diameter and depth. Their bases were formed by the undisturbed Upper Greensand, which was 0.5m below the existing tower floor. A second pair of pits was found within the southern trench in the tower, in corresponding positions, although it was noted that the north-western of the pits (Pit 2 in fig. 15) was slightly out of alignment, possibly due to the presence of the large Upper Greensand rock imbedded within the underlying dark soil. The rectangular hole and these circular pits may have contained supporting timbers for an earlier first floor within the tower.
3. The southern trench did not contain the usual white mortar rubble, instead a layer of dust was removed to expose the remains of a tiled floor. The tiles of which this was composed were c.21m square, 4cm



Figure 16 The northern trench in the tower, looking north-west. The scale is 2m.



Figure 17 The southern trench in the tower, looking south-west. The scale is 2m.

4. Set within the tiles was a ledger stone, only part of which extended into the trench, the remainder lying underneath the central aisle of the tower. That part of the inscription visible stated:

“Beneath this
George Dolb
James Butle
His Wife he
October the
Seven

To me twas given to D
To live Alas one mo
Mark how impartial”

The first line of the inscription presumably continues with “stone lies”, or similar words. The name of the interment is “George Dolb...” The “James Butle..” maybe the politician James Butler of nearby Warminghurst and the presence of his name could indicate that either George worked for him or that he set up the ledger stone or both. The reference to his wife may indicate that she is buried with him, the inscription going on to name her. The “Seven” is almost certainly “Seventeen” and would refer to a year within the 18th century when either George or his wife died. The lower part of the inscription is a poem or epigram of Matthew Prior’s entitled “For my own Tombstone”, dating to before 1721. The full text is:

“To me ’twas given to die: to thee ’tis given
To live. Alas! one moment sets us even.
Mark! how impartial is the will of heaven!”

5. The ledger stone has clearly been inserted into the pre-existing tile floor, since the tiles have been crudely cut to allow for it. There is also a patch of brickwork at the western end of the surviving floor, which is probably also a later alteration.
6. The nature of the earlier flooring within the tower is curious. The two trenches presented very different aspects, with no trace of tiling in the northern trench and no trace of underlying crushed greensand in the southern. It would seem on the basis of the evidence that the two sides were treated differently, although their junction is now obscured by the higher central aisle.
7. The dating of the tiled floor is not clear, it must precede the 18th century ledger stone and is either contemporary with, or later than, the late 15th or early 16th century tower. There was no trace of an earlier floor below it, although trodden earth may well have sufficed. Both the tiled and

crushed greensand floors were preserved *in situ* under the new flooring.

The Stove



Figure 18 The brick chamber containing the front of the stove, looking north. The scale is divided into 0.5m sections.

1. The removal of some aluminium plates from the floor of the nave on the 20th April 2012 enabled a limited photographic record to be made of the Victorian heating system of the church, and in particular of the stove. The stove sat beneath the floor of the south aisle, immediately to the east of the font. The front of the stove was accessed through an iron grille in the floor leading to a small brick chamber.
2. The basic principal of the system was that cold air was introduced at a low level into the chamber within which the stove sat, which, when heated by the stove, then travelled around the church under the floor and up through iron grilles. The smoke from the stove exited along a pipe running north from its rear. The stove was manufactured under patent by John Grundy's of Tyldesley, Manchester. Graffiti on the cement sealing it in records that it was installed by H. Allen on November 2nd 1889.



Figure 19 The exhaust pipe exiting from the boiler, looking south. The scale is 2m.

CONCLUSION

1. The two most significant archaeological features revealed during the course of the works at St. Mary's Church, Washington were part of the foundation of the original wall dividing the nave from the chancel and the remains of an historic floor surface within the tower. There was also a suggestion of a further wall foundation within the trenches at the west end of the nave. Unfortunately little can be said to more precisely date and characterise these remains, without more extensive archaeological investigations than this project allowed.
2. Outside the church the shallow depth of the extension foundations and the routing of the service trench allowed for only minimal disturbance of human remains, with only four partial skeletons being revealed. This has confirmed the advisability of running all service trenches initially directly away from church buildings until the area of the earlier and shallower burials is passed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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