

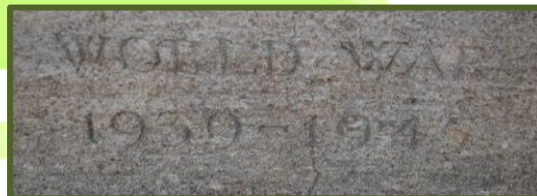


Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**An archaeological watching brief on a new path to
the town War Memorial, Uppingham Parish Church**

Iain Soden BA MCIfA



Email: iain@isheritage.co.uk

Tel: 07742 901760

Website: www.isheritage.co.uk

Uppingham Churchyard and War Memorial

An archaeological watching brief on a new path to the town War Memorial, Uppingham Parish Church

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Summary

Earthmoving for a new access path across the churchyard of SS Peter and Paul, Uppingham exposed no human remains and disturbed only the remains of an earlier path and its sub-base. The paths were and are for public access to the town's War Memorial.

Introduction

Uppingham Town Council was keen to ensure that provision of access to the existing town war memorial was upgraded in time for the 2018 centenary of the end of the First World War and the Remembrance Sunday attendance at the site, which lies at an elevated position at one corner of the sloping churchyard of the parish church above the junction made by the A6003 main road through the town with South View (NGR: SP 8664 9954; Fig 1).

The church of SS Peter and Paul is a medieval foundation, with earlier origins, and its precipitous, hillside churchyard is extensive, lying within Uppingham Conservation area. There are numerous 19th-century graves with their stones and other monuments in close proximity to the War Memorial which was (obviously) put in after the First World War. It is said to have been moved slightly after structural issues were formerly discovered.

Accordingly an archaeological watching brief was required and Iain Soden Heritage Services was engaged by the architects on their behalf to carry this out. Fieldwork took place on 1 October 2018 in fine weather.

Uppingham Churchyard and War Memorial

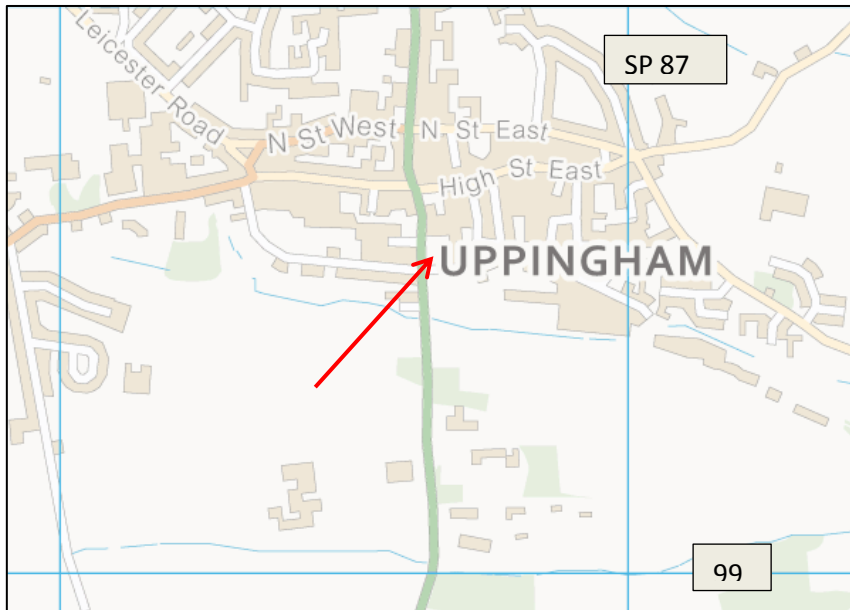


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2018

The war memorial is Grade II listed (National Heritage List 1180215) and lies within the Uppingham Conservation Area. A further listed memorial, a cross to Uppingham School Headmaster Edward Thring (NHL 1361448) stands close by.

The War Memorial, by architect Sir Ninian Cooper, and made of Clipsham stone, was unveiled on 19 July 1920. Not long after, it had to be moved a few metres from its original site in the churchyard wall at the corner of the churchyard after cracks appeared at its base.

The memorial can be seen in its present position as early as c1930 in the aerial view (below), by which time it was served by a new path.

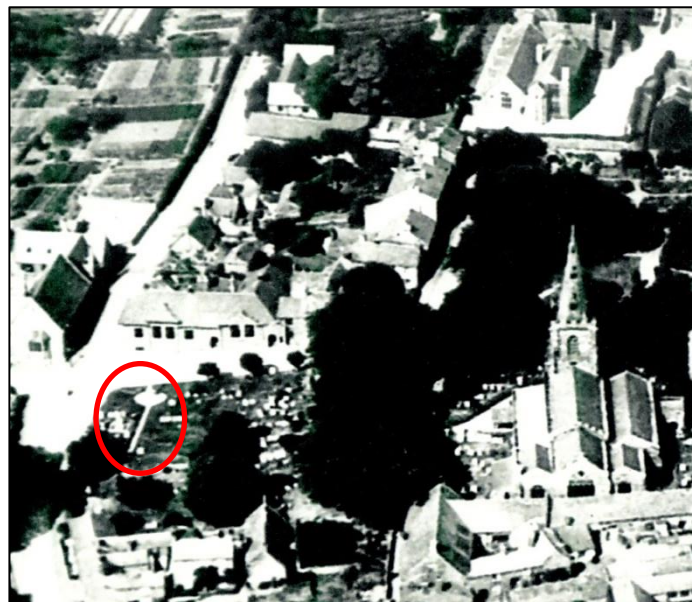


Fig 2: Postcard aerial photograph c1930, showing the War Memorial and earlier path (ringed). Photo kindly provided by Uppingham Town Council

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Fieldwork and results

A small 2-tonne tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to strip the course of the new path, first of its mat of turf and topsoil (about 100mm thickness) and then of the underlying material (about a further 200mm thickness). The underlying layer comprised a mixture of an imported layer of clinker, ash, brick pieces and broken gravestone fragments with grave-kerb pieces and almost-complete grave markers/footstones; these had formed the sub-base of a previous path. Along the edges of this material was the graveyard subsoil (or possibly grave-earth) which was a mid-brown/orange sandy clay with stone chips. About 2m from the War Memorial was a dump of 20th-century pottery and glass (see below), virtually inseparable from the former path sub-base.

The approach-section of the stripped area began at a flight of three existing steps, which had once served the previous path measured c15m long x 1.2m wide. The deepest cutting to achieve the new formation level was c300mm.

At its western end the new path encompassed the foot of the octagonal War Memorial. The existing memorial base is of concrete, and is encircled by a wider filled-in pit which had probably been dug for inserting and then removing wooden shuttering. The new work covered this.

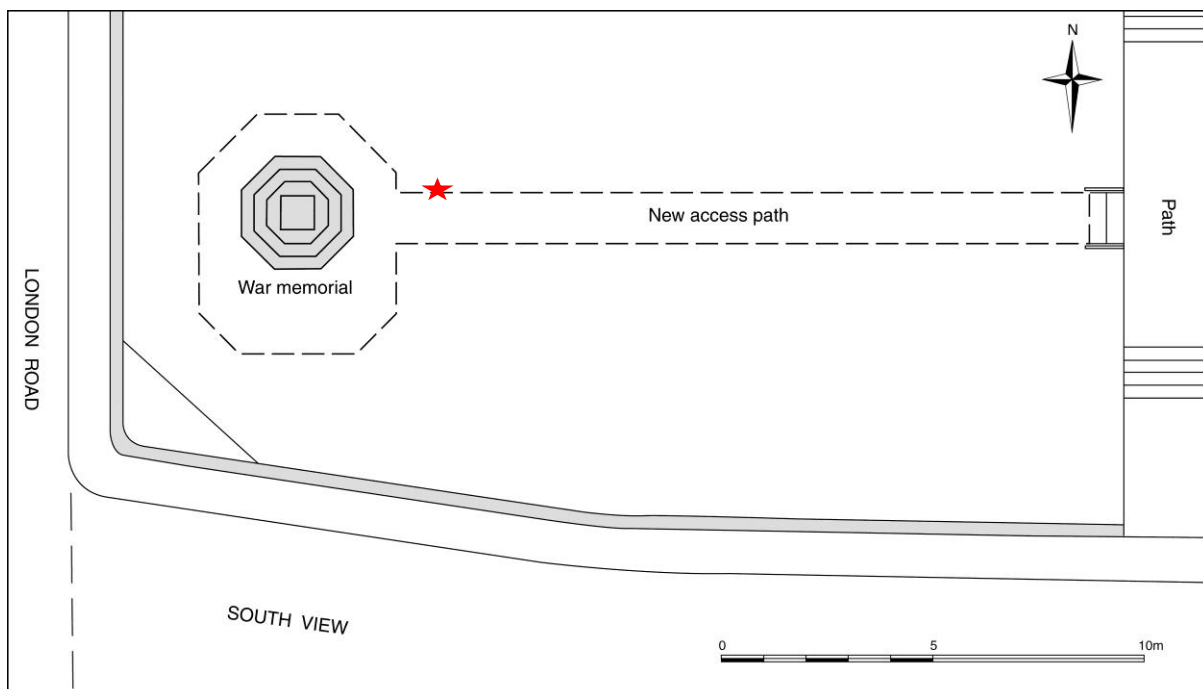


Fig 3: The course of the new path at the south-west corner of the churchyard. A red star marks the location of a modern art-pottery deposit. (Andy Isham, after BSM Noble, architects)

Uppingham Churchyard and War Memorial



Fig 4: Removing the turf; note the re-used foot-stones being uncovered. At the bottom edge of this view is the top step serving the earlier path



Fig 5: The final machining to a depth of about 250mm. Note the clinker sub-base of the old path down the centre



Fig 6: One of the foot-stones/grave markers; scale 30cm

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The following inscriptions were noted on *ex-situ* foot-stones/grave markers (in date order):

EL 1849

WS 1850

MF 1851

MW 1855

JC 1858 & EAC 1906 (pictured)

MAF 1859

AW 1861

TGI 1867 & MD 1875

JD 1870 & MD 1907

MF (date illegible)

DT & ST & MAT (no date)

Already previously disturbed, and therefore of no further archaeological interest, these were re-incorporated into the new works, face-down as a foil to frost-damage and separated from the new concrete by a builders' membrane. Some had been used previously to line the up-slope cut-out formed by the erection of the vertical War Memorial into the steep churchyard slope, and these were set aside for re-use exactly in that way.

A dump of art-class pottery was disturbed about 2m from the memorial itself (location marked on Fig 3). Much of this comprised complete, but subsequently broken pots, mostly painted and glazed, and all using the washed, pre-prepared commercial white-firing clays used in 20th-century kilns. It included hugely artistic and competent (if not actually professional) art-pieces alongside beginners' coil-pots and children's finger-pots, as if a variety of ceramics classes were represented. None were apparently kiln-wasters, perhaps tending to militate against them being just rejects from a firing. Two were signed on the base – one J.A.FERGUSON and the other R.S.A. 1962, providing an earliest possible (and likely) date for the deposit. There were a number of commercially-made kiln-bobs or spacers too, which may indicate that the wares were stacked at the site. Also present were at least six small, unbroken screw-top glass jars containing paint -one at least was a re-used Vaseline jar, together with four complete, but empty wine / spirits bottles.

While they may have been brought in amongst earlier path aggregate –and were buried as oversupply, and were simply unclaimed or unwanted pieces from an art-school pottery, it remains just possible that they briefly constituted a poignant local act of homage to the fallen, since so much appears to have been brought in complete and spacers suggest some stacking on site. That the spirits bottles and the jars were all unbroken is notable. However, the evidence is equivocal. None of these modern finds has been retained.



Fig 7: Art class pottery and bottle from sub-base of the former path - note the signed pieces; kiln-spacers at bottom left; scale 30cm

Conclusions

The Uppingham War Memorial has been made more easily accessible to the townsfolk and others who are interested and wish to commemorate the sacrifice of the men of Uppingham who served and died during two world wars. It is now also more safely-accessible in wintry conditions.

The work was carried out without disturbing human remains or *in-situ* gravestones. Some *ex-situ* grave markers were noted and recorded, which had probably been disturbed by the original path.

A dump of art-class pottery and bottles may have been brought in amongst earlier path aggregate, or possibly constitutes a non-religious homage to the fallen, since so much appears to have been brought in complete and a few may have been stacked. The pottery deposit dated no earlier than 1962.

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Fig 8: The War Memorial during works on 1 October 2018.

Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	Uppingham Churchyard and War Memorial
OASIS ID	iainsode1-331032
Project Type	Watching Brief
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	No
Current land use	Cof E Churchyard
Development type	Enhancement landscaping to war memorial
Reason for investigation	Conservation Area, Ecclesiastical faculty
National grid reference	SP 8664 9954
Start/end dates of fieldwork	01/10/2018
Archive recipient	Leicestershire Museums
Study area	20 sq m



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

16 October 2018