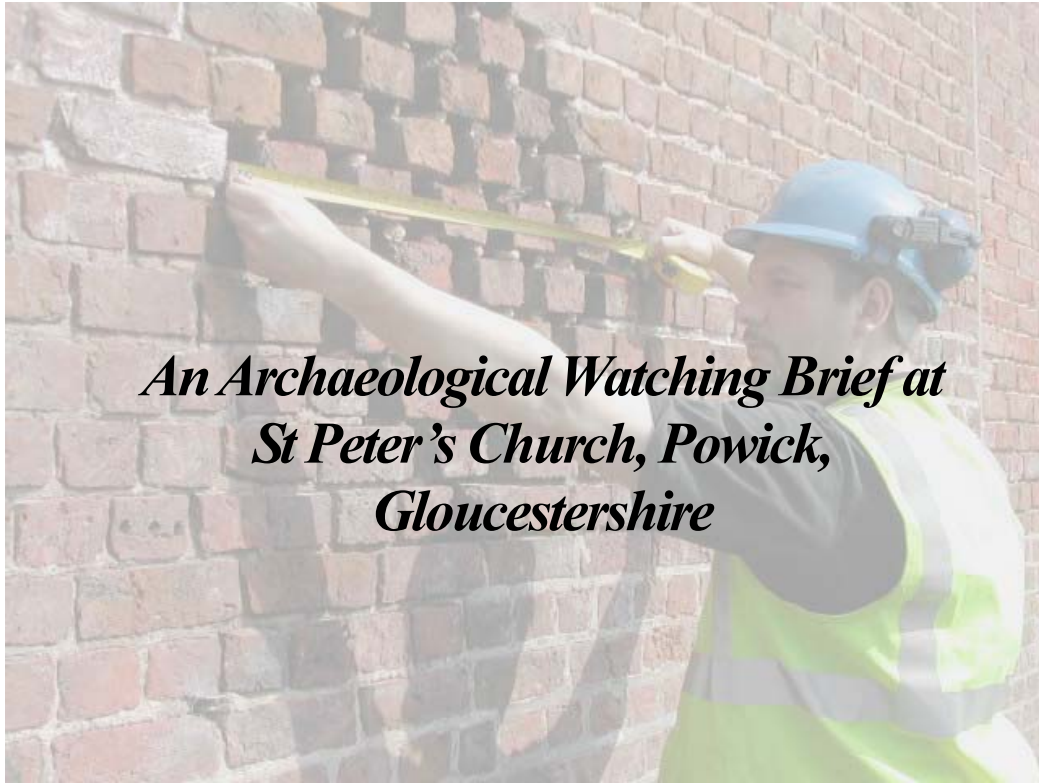


Mercian Archaeology

-taking the past into the future

*Archaeological Watching Brief at
St Peter's Church, Powick, Worcestershire*



*An Archaeological Watching Brief at
St Peter's Church, Powick,
Gloucestershire*

A Report for Strachey & Strachey Conservation

June 2007

© Mercian Archaeology

Project: PJ 186



Mercian Archaeology undertake all types of archaeological project across England and Wales. We offer a reliable and friendly service at competitive rates. We will manage your archaeological project from start to finish to ensure that any planning conditions are fulfilled so that your development can be confidently moved forward. We provide a full archaeological service for everyone, from commercial developers to private individuals

- ❑ *historic building recording*
- ❑ *archaeological evaluation*
- ❑ *watching briefs*
- ❑ *desk-based assessments*
- ❑ *excavation*
- ❑ *landscape assessment*
- ❑ *survey*
- ❑ *osteological analysis*
- ❑ *metal detector survey*
- ❑ *field walking*
- ❑ *photographic recording*
- ❑ *house history*
- ❑ *illustration and historic reconstruction*
- ❑ *partnership projects*

Telephone / Fax: 01905 420087

Email: paulwilliams@mercianarchaeology.co.uk

www.mercianarchaeology.co.uk

1. Project Background

1.1. Location of the Site

Powick lies on the A449 Worcester to Malvern road, at its junction with the B4424 Upton Road, around 4 kilometres to the south-west of the city of Worcester. St Peter's Church stands on a promontory to the east of the village, overlooking the floodplain of the River Teme as it approaches its confluence with the River Severn (Figure 1; NGR SO 83447 51541).

1.2. Reasons for the Watching Brief

The archaeological watching brief was suggested by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor as the appropriate response to the threat posed to the archaeological site (church and churchyard) by the development process. This would involve the excavation of a new soakaway and connecting trench.

A watching brief is defined as:

A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be in a specified area on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (IFA 2001).

A watching brief at the site was proposed in order that a record of any archaeological remains or deposits encountered during excavations associated with the development may be made and placed into context. It was also proposed, in order to best preserve the integrity of any articulated human remains, should they be encountered.

2. Methods and Process

2.1. Project Specification

- The project fieldwork conforms to the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (IFA 2001).
- The archive conforms to the standards and guidelines established by the Archaeological Data Service.
- Mercian Archaeology adhere to the service practice and health and safety policy as contained within the Mercian Archaeology Service Manual (Williams 2003)

2.2. Aims of the Project

The watching brief aimed to:

- Use the results of the archaeological work to produce a report highlighting: -
 1. The survival and location of archaeological deposits from any period.
 2. Make an analysis and interpretation of all identified natural and cultural deposits
- Based on the above, establish the significance, survival, condition and period of the archaeological remains and place them within context at local, regional or national level where relevant.

3. Brief Background

Abbreviations used: WSM ~ Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record

The village of Powick lies at around 40 metres above Ordnance Datum to the south of the floodplain of the River Teme, which for many centuries has served as a tract of permanent pasture and managed meadow land known collectively as ‘Powick Hams’

The solid geology of the area is of Keuper Marl overlain by river terrace gravels of the River Severn (Barclay *et al* 1988). There are localised ridges of New Red Sandstone (Miller 1968, 48). The soils are of the Wick1 Association, being well-drained coarse loamy and sandy soils (Ragg *et al* 1984).

The church of St Peter is a multi-phase structure with its earliest visible elements dating from the 12th century. This period is evidenced in the fabric of the transepts, with the chancel dating from the 13th century, the walls of the aisles to the 14th century and the nave arcade was built around 1400; the tower dates from the early 15th century. The original form of the Norman church appears to have been a central tower, with transepts and an aisled nave, though the exact plan remains conjectural (VCH IV, 184-92). The walls of the tower display the indents of bullets fired towards the church during the advance of Parliamentary troops towards the Royalist stronghold of Worcester in 1651 (*Ibid*).

The church underwent programmes of restoration between 1845 and 1897 by architects Harvey Elginton and later Whitley Clancey (<http://www.churchplansonline.org/T>).

One previous archaeological investigation has taken place at the church; in 2001 a watching brief was undertaken on the excavation of a soakaway pit to the southern side of the church (Locket 2001; WSM 30358).

4. The Watching Brief

4.1. Watching Brief: The Fieldwork Methodology

Martin Cook carried out the watching brief on behalf of Mercian Archaeology.

The site photography was carried out using digital format. A scale was used where possible.

Proforma Record Forms were used to record the site stratigraphy in tandem with site notes to produce the final record contained within this report.

A narrow trench approximately 5m long, 0.30m wide and *c* 0.60m deep was excavated by hand, north west from the corner of the tower and the north aisle. This connected to a soakaway pit, also excavated by hand, approximately 1.00m square and 1.00m deep (Figure 2).

The good working conditions and cooperation of the contractors ensured that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

4.2. The Results of the Watching Brief

Only two contexts were identified during the watching brief (Fig 2a). The topsoil [100] was a 40-centimetre thick layer of mid-yellow brown sandy clay, which was heavily disturbed by roots. The subsoil below [101] was a mid-yellow brown very slightly sandy clay containing occasional small rounded pebbles.

The subsoil contained occasional fragments of disarticulated human bone. The only dateable find was a silver shilling of 1939, which was retrieved from the topsoil.

The natural undisturbed sub-stratum was not observed in the trench.

5. Comment

The watching brief encountered no significant archaeological deposits that could add to the definitive story of the development of the site. There were no remains or deposits encountered that would indicate activity of any kind on the site prior to the 12th century. The watching brief undertaken to monitor another soakaway pit, excavated in 2001 (Lockett 2001), also encountered little informative information regarding the site, though from the monitoring it can be determined that any medieval burials no longer survive, or did not exist, in the areas monitored.

As would be expected, any intrusive work within a churchyard will encounter disarticulated, human skeletal remains, as well as in-situ burials. The watching brief identified fragments of

disarticulated human bone, which would have been disturbed during later grave digging and re-deposition of material around the graveyard. Skeletons frequently become disarticulated when new graves are excavated into unmarked older ones, especially those that were not particularly deep. Medieval burials were often interred less than 50 centimetres below ground level, and it wasn't until the mid-19th century that burial laws were introduced to safeguard the health of the public and preserve the dignity of the dead.

6. Conclusion

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at St Peter's Church, Powick during groundworks associated with the excavation of a new soakaway pit. No features or deposits were encountered that could further our knowledge of the history and development of the site.

7. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Tony, Chris and the site team from Strachey & Strachey Conservation. Thanks are also due to Nick Joyce of Nick Joyce Architects. The fieldwork was undertaken by Martin Cook and thanks are also due to him.

REFERENCES

- Barclay, W.J, Green, G.W, Hodder, M.T, Moorlock, B.S.P, Smart, J.G.O, Strange, P.J and Wilson, D** (1988) *Bristol Channel (Sheet 51° N-04° W): Solid Geology, 1:250,000. British Geological Survey*
- Institute of field Archaeologists** (2001) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- Lockett, N** (2001) *Watching Brief at St Peter's Church, Powick, Worcestershire, Worcestershire Archaeological Service, Internal Report 919*
- Miller, T** (1968) Geology, in Pevsner, N, *The Buildings of England*
- Page, W (ed)** (1913) *Victoria County History, Worcestershire Volume VI. Reprinted 1971*
- Ragg, J M, Beard, G R, George, H, Heaven, F W, Hollis, J M, Jones, R J A, Palmer, R C, Reeve, M J, Robson, J D, and Whitfield, W A D** (1984). Soils and their use in midland and western England, Soil Survey of England and Wales, 12
- Williams P** (2003) *Mercian Archaeology Service Manual*

COPYRIGHT

This report is copyright to Mercian Archaeology. The client will be granted full licence to use the information contained within the report on full settlement of the account

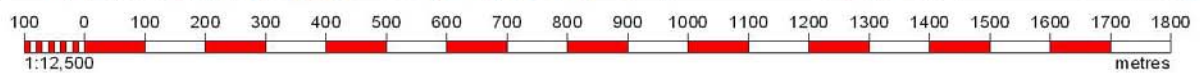
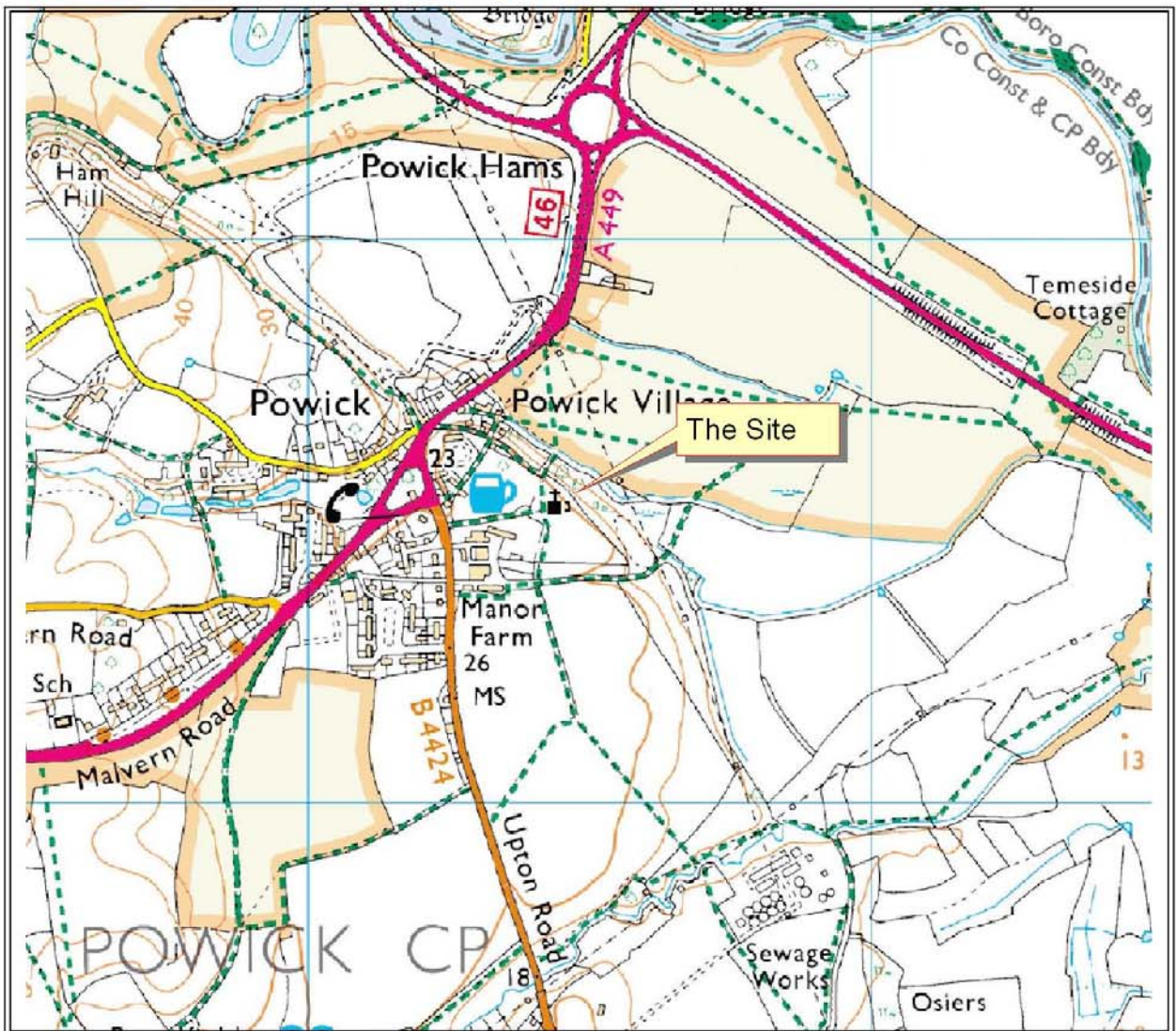
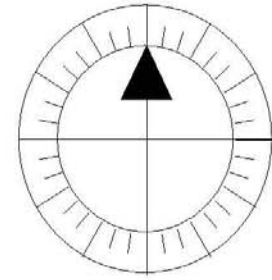
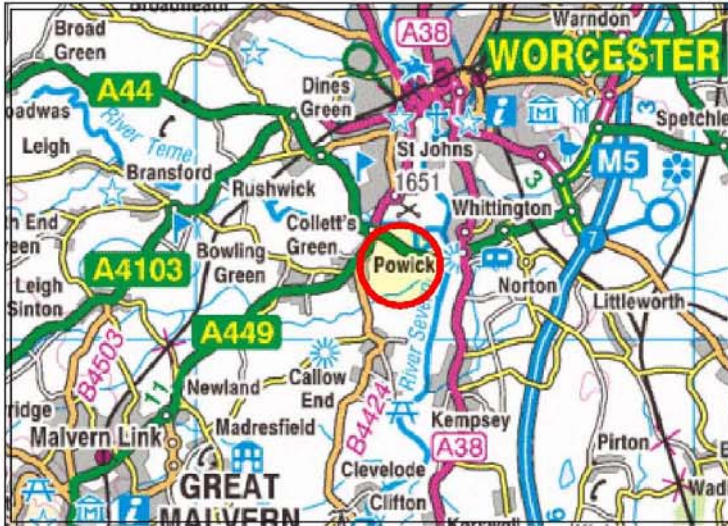


Plate 1: *The connecting trench under excavation, looking east.*



Plate 2: The excavated soakaway pit

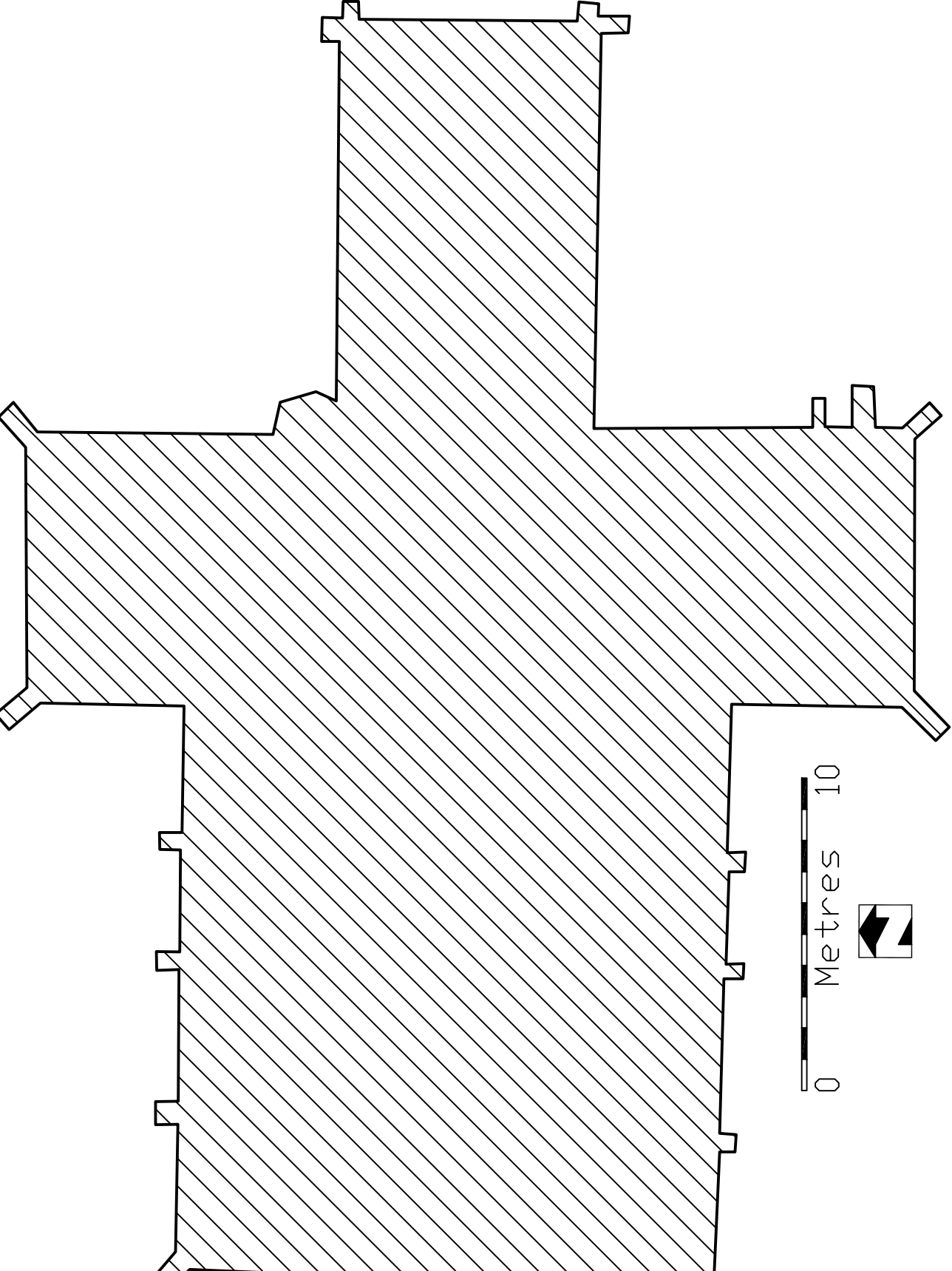
Figure 1: Location of the Site



Location of The Site at Powick,
Worcestershire

©Crown Copyright All Rights Reserved

Licence number 100040597



Saint Peter's Church, Powick

A S S

Figure
Section