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Archaeological Services

Archaeological attendance  
during groundworks at  
St John the Baptist Church,  
Whitwick, Leicestershire  
SK 43441 16236

Donald Clark



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**Archaeological attendance during groundworks at**

**St John the Baptist Church**

**Whitwick, Leicestershire**

**SK 43441 16236**

**For: Whitwick PCC**

Approved by:



**Signed:**

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Whitwick, Leicestershire  
(SK 43441 16236)**

**Donald Clark**

**Summary**

*Exploratory groundworks to inspect the foundations of the south porch of St. John the Baptist Church, Whitwick, Leicestershire were monitored by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on 6th October 2016 on behalf of Whitwick PCC.*

*Two small trenches were hand excavated to a depth where the foundations were visible, the removed soil was inspected but no archaeological finds were present. The base and sides of the trenches were inspected but revealed no archaeological features or deposits other than the foundations. It was commented on at the time of excavation that the ground around the porch had been previously disturbed, but there was no record of when this may have occurred.*

*A record of the archaeological attendance will be transferred to the Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the Accession No. X.A114.2016.*

**Introduction**

Archaeological attendance was undertaken on 6th October 2016 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Whitwick PCC at St. John the Baptist Church, Whitwick, Leicestershire during the excavation by hand of trial holes to inspect the foundations of the south porch to the church. The holes were required to be dug to the depth of the bottom of the foundation to establish the depth of footing and ground conditions. The porch has subsided over a number of years and the exploratory works were necessary to enable a design for the underpinning to be prepared and quantified. The DAC granted a faculty for the trial holes with a condition that 'no works shall take place until the PCC, after consultation with the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the PCC and approved by the DAC'. The Written Scheme (WSI; ULAS 2015) was

subsequently prepared by ULAS for the PCC and approved by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser. It provided details of the aims, objectives and methodologies to be adopted during the course of the work. The fieldwork was intended to provide a record of any archaeological remains which might be present in mitigation of the impact of the proposed development.

All archaeological work was in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CiFA) Code of Conduct (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2014). The *LCC Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland* (1997) were also adhered to.

### Site Description, Topography and Geology

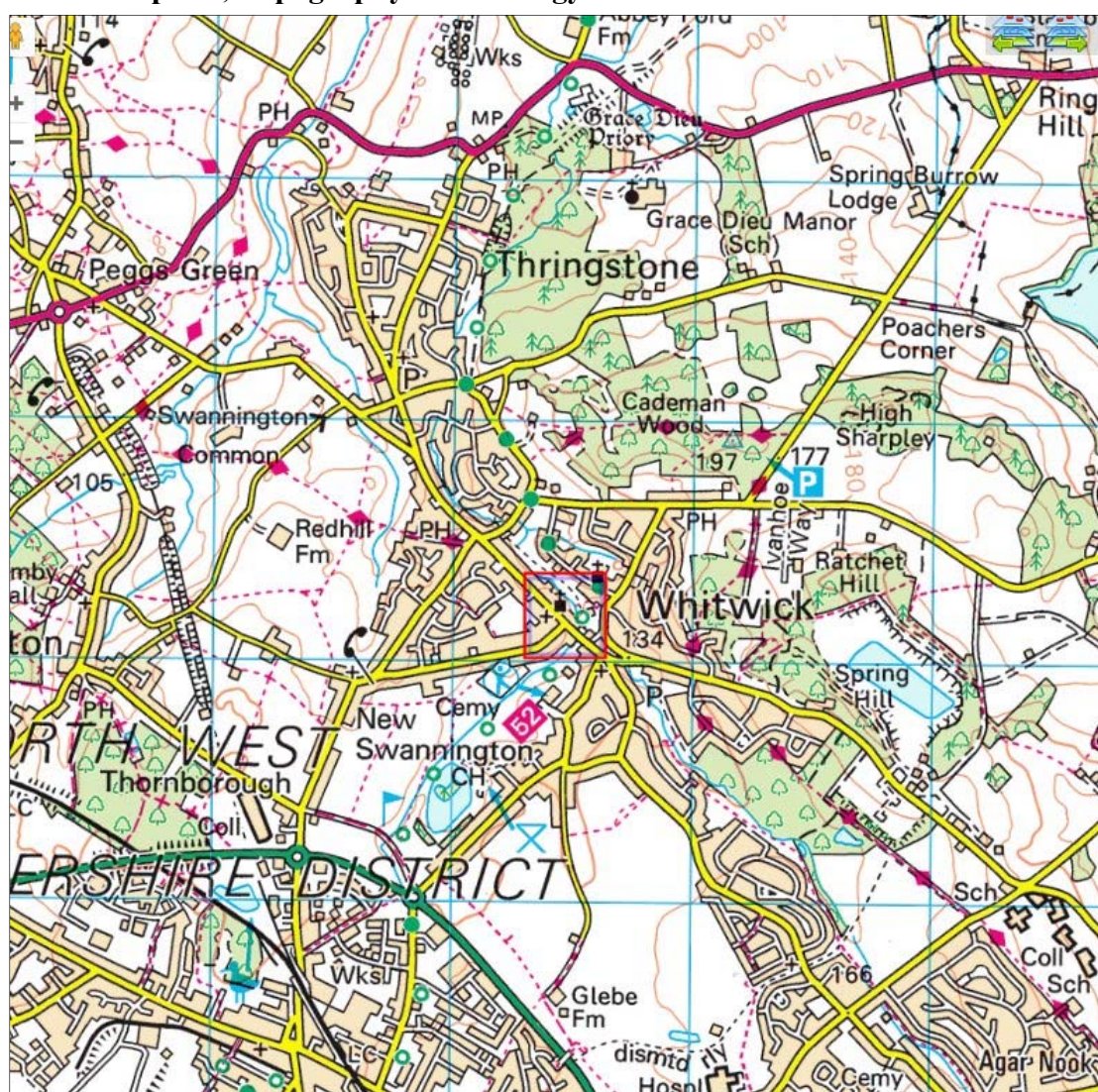


Figure 1: Whitwick, Leicestershire



Figure 2: Location of St John the Baptist Church, Whitwick  
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016

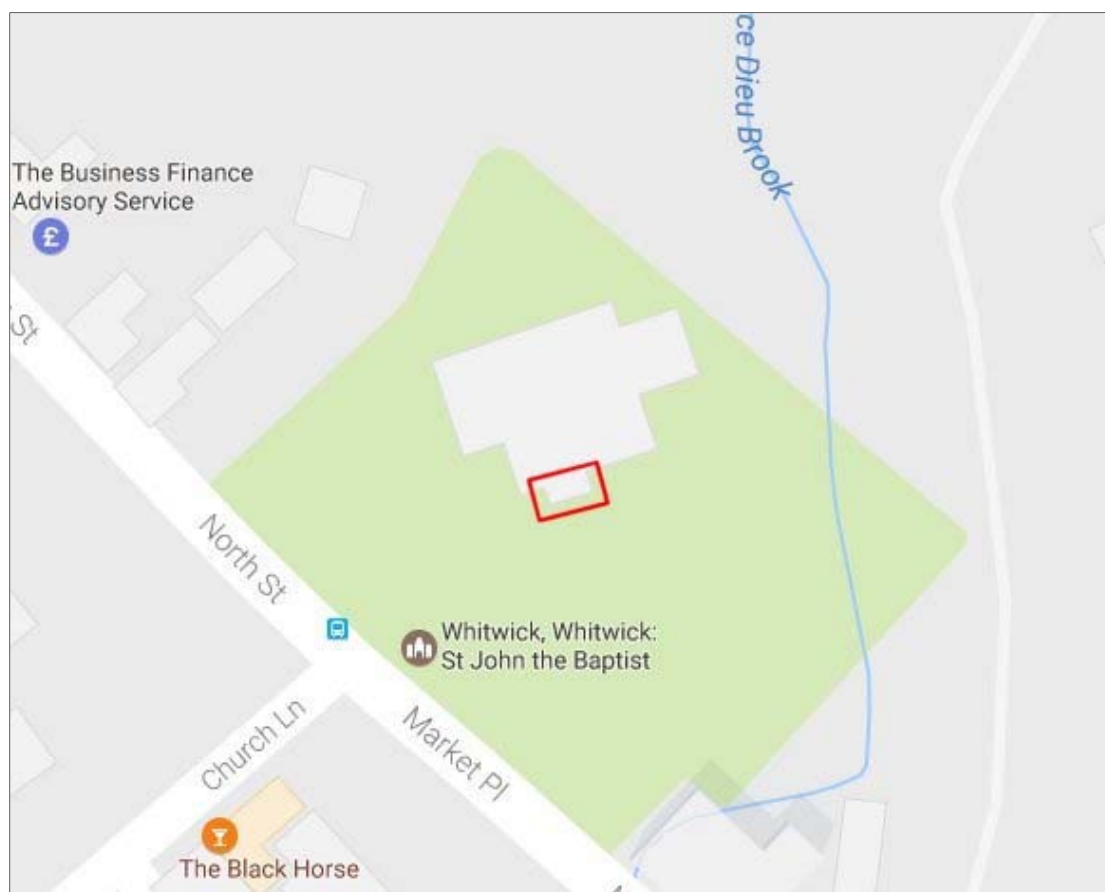


Figure 3: Floorplan of St John the Baptist Church with south porch highlighted  
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The site lies at a height of approximately 137m aOD on a south-east facing slope. The Geology of Britain viewer indicates that the underlying geology of the site is likely to be: Gunthorpe Member – Sandstone/Tarporley Siltstone Formation - Siltstone, Mudstone and Sandstone.

### **Archaeological and Historical Background**

The Domesday Survey of 1086 has the following entry listed for Whitwick:

“Hugh holsa ½ c. of land in Whitwick from Hugh. Land for ½ plough. 1 smallholder. Woodland 1 furlong long and ½ furlong wide. Value 2s.” (Morris, 1980).

By the 12th century, the manor of Whitwick included Bardon, Markfield, Newtown Unthank, Whittington and parts of Hugglescote and the major landowners were recorded as the Earl of Leicester and Robert de Ferrers. A castle under the ownership of the Earls of Leicester is recorded here at this time, but was said to be derelict by 1427. In 1293, Edward I granted a weekly market at Whitwick, and also an annual fair in celebration of the nativity of St. John the Baptist on June 24th.

By the 14th century the economic prosperity of the manor began to decline, largely due to a series of absentee landlords throughout the medieval period. In 1331, the lord of the manor was Henry Beaumont who, being seated at Beaumanor, leased his property

in Whitwick to various members of the local nobility. Records survive of a dispute between Henry Beaumont and his tenants, relating to incidences of vandalism and looting of his property. Although the outcome of the dispute is not recorded, it is evidence that the manor was falling into a state of disrepair by this time. A document of 1427 shows that land in Whitwick was only worth two pence an acre at this time, with 12 of the 31 houses being uninhabited (Smith 1984). In 1507, the manor of Whitwick reverted to the Crown. In 1612, the land was sold by James I to Sir Henry Hastings and Henry Cutler for £4000. The manor remained the property of the Hastings family until the 19th century.

John Marius Wilson's Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales of 1870-1872 records Whitwick as:

WHITWICK, a small town, a township, a parish, and a subdistrict, in Ashby-de-la-Zouch district, Derby. The town stands 1½ mile NNE of Coalville r. station, and 5 E by S of Ashby; underwent improvement of its market place in 1859; and has a post-office‡ under Leicester, a fine old church restored in 1849, four dissenting chapels, a Roman Catholic chapel, national schools, charities £40, and a weekly market. The township comprises 3,260 acres. Real property, £21,467; of which £6,800 are in mines.

Pop. in 1851, 2,836; in 1861, 3,759. Houses, 708. An ancient castle of the Earls of Lancaster stood on Castle hill; figured, for a time, as an important fortress; and is now represented only by a few traces of its keep. Bardon Hill, about 2 miles from the town, is much frequented by picnic parties, and commands an extensive view. A Roman Catholic monastery, the earliest erected in England since the Reformation, and a reformatory for Roman Catholic criminals established in 1856, stand amid hills within a part of Charnwood forest.—The parish contains also Swannington and Thringstone townships; includes parts of Coalville and Oaks chapelries; and comprises 6,220 acres. Pop in 1851., 4,956; in 1861, 6,439. Houses, 1,303. The living is a vicarage in the diocese of Peterborough. Value, £400.\* Patron, the Duchy of Lancaster. The p. curacy of St. George or Swannington is a separate benefice. -The sub-district contains four parishes and a part, and comprises 14,298 acres. Pop., 9,874. Houses, 2,055.

The Church of St John the Baptist has a Decorated west tower with angle buttresses. Most of the rest of the church is also Decorated, but was extensively restored by J.P. St Aubyn in 1848-50 when the nave and north aisle were extended east by one bay. The arcades have tall octagonal piers and double chamfered arches. The present south arcade lies south of an earlier one, so the axis of the nave is not in line with the tower and chancel. Only the south doorway goes back to the 13th century. (Pevsner 1981, 421).

## **Aims and Objectives**

The general aims of the archaeological attendance were as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.



- To advance understanding of the heritage assets
- To produce a site archive and report of any results for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Leicestershire HER.

## Methodology

Prior to the commencement of works an Accession Code was obtained and the required archive deposition forms completed. An OASIS online record was initiated and the key fields completed on Details, Location and Creator forms. In accordance with the design specification document, the project involved the monitoring of the hand-excavation of ground investigation pits in order to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains.

A photographic record, utilising high resolution digital data capture, was maintained during the course of the fieldwork and included:

- the site prior to commencement of fieldwork;
- the site during work, showing specific stages of fieldwork

## Results

Groundworks commenced on 6th October 2016, with the excavation of two trenches (one on each side of the south porch) to allow a structural engineer access to the footings beneath the porch walls. Archaeological attendance was a condition specified by the Diocesan Advisory Committee and an archaeologist from University of Leicester Archaeological Services oversaw the groundworks. The two trenches are separately discussed below.

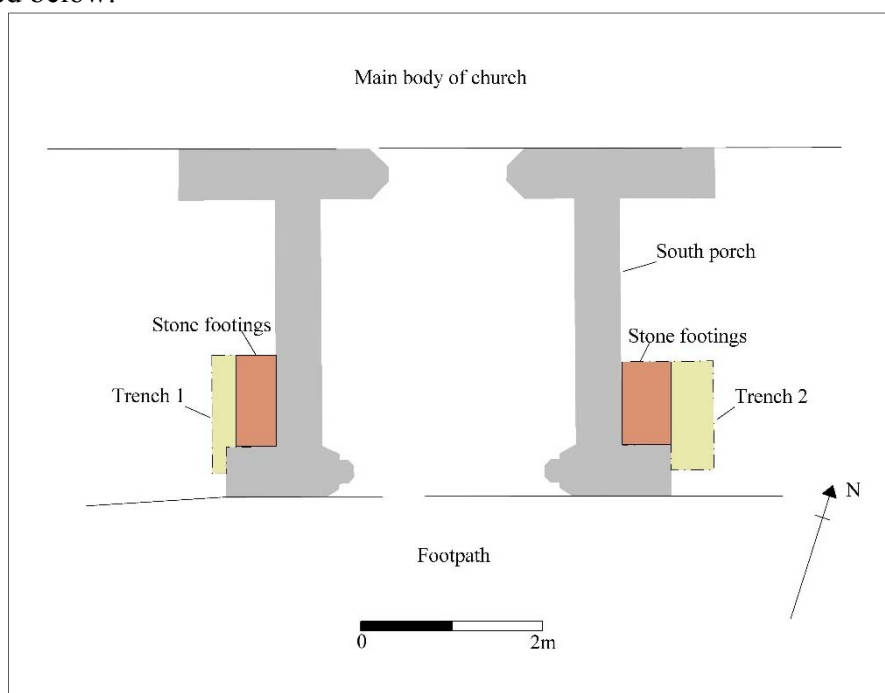


Figure 4: Plan of south porch walls with positions of exploratory trenches

### ***Trench 1***

Trench 1 was hand excavated on the outside of the western porch wall. The trench measured 1.30m x 0.70m and was excavated to a depth of 0.70m. A concrete drain was removed using a Stihl saw and breaker followed by manual digging. The depth was sufficient to allow the structural engineer to examine the footings of the porch wall. The removed spoil, a very dark grey-brown silty sand, was checked for archaeological finds but this proved negative. The trench walls were clear of any archaeological features or deposits other than the porch wall.

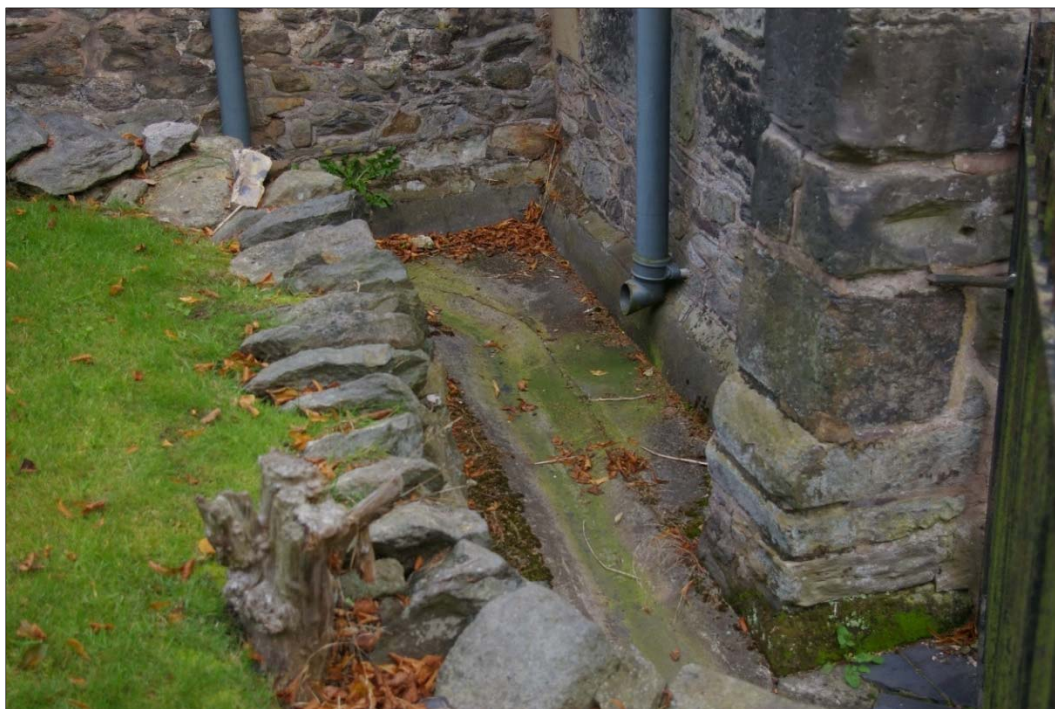


Figure 5: West wall of porch prior to excavation



Figure 6: West wall of porch following excavation

### ***Trench 2***

Trench 2 was hand excavated on the outside of the eastern porch wall. The trench measured 1.20m x 1.0m and was excavated to a depth of 0.50m. The depth was sufficient to allow the structural engineer to examine the footings of the porch wall. The removed spoil, a dark grey brown silty sand, was checked for archaeological finds but this proved negative. The trench walls were clear of any archaeological features or deposits other than the porch wall.



Figure 7: East wall of porch prior to excavation



Figure 8: East wall following excavation

## Conclusion

The groundworks at St John the Baptist Church, Whitwick did not reveal any archaeological deposits or even human bone, this may be due to previous disturbance of the ground around the south porch. This disturbance may be due to the addition of a drainage channel on the west side and to church renovation and extension between 1848 and 1850.

## Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A114.2016), consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service.

The paper archive consists of:

- Photographic record indices
- 17 digital photographs
- A risk assessment form
- WSI
- Report

## Publication

A version of the excavation summary (see above) will appear in due course in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*.

## Acknowledgements

Donald Clark of ULAS undertook the archaeological watching brief on behalf of Whitwick PCC. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

## Bibliography

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## Oasis Information

Oasis number	universi1_271614
Project Name	St. John the Baptist Church, Whitwick, Leicestershire
Project Type	Archaeological attendance during groundworks
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Donald Clark
Previous/Future work	Remedial works
Current Land Use	Church and churchyard
Reason for Attendance	Diocesan Advisory Committee Condition
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK 43441 16236
Start/end dates of field work	6 <sup>th</sup> October 2016
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council

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