



**Archaeological Attendance and
Recording during groundworks at
St Peter's Church,
Main Street,
Tilton on the Hill,
Leicestershire.**

NGR: SK 74341 05655

Andrew Hyam




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For: PCC of St Peter's Church, Tilton on the Hill

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**University of Leicester
Archaeological Services
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614**

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Summary

A programme of archaeological attendance and recording (watching brief) was undertaken at St Peter's Church, Main Street, Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire between the 1st and 8th of October 2018 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). The work took place in the churchyard during the installation of a new sewer pipe running along the north side of the church building down to Oakham Road. The Grade I listed church has elements dating to the 12th century with probable origins earlier than this date. Therefore a watching brief was requested in order to ensure that any archaeological remains that may be affected by the works were fully recorded.

The pipe trench measured approximately 80m in length with an average width of between 0.5 and 0.6m. The excavated depth of the trench varied between 1.1m and nearly 2m. A narrow drystone wall built of locally sourced ironstone was identified running on a north to south alignment near to the north-western corner of the chancel wall. No dating evidence was associated with this feature which may represent an earlier churchyard boundary wall. A circular brick-built well-like structure was also observed which is likely to be a modern soakaway feature serving modern rainwater services. No evidence of any earlier phases of church buildings was observed during the work although some fragments of moulded stone were recovered.

The report will be archived under accession number X.A104.2018

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for a programme of archaeological attendance at St Peter's Church, Main Street, Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire. The report was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Peter's Church from University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in advance of the installation of new sewer drainage and associated groundworks within the churchyard to the north and north-east of the church.

The village, which lies in the Harborough District of Leicestershire, is around 10 miles south of Melton Mowbray and 13 miles north of Market Harborough (Fig. 1). The church of St Peter's lies in the heart of the village on the corner of Main Street and Oakham Road (Fig. 2). Most of the church building is constructed from locally sourced ironstone with limestone detailing and a limestone spire. It has a raised churchyard which is well over 1 metre above the present height of Oakham Road which is around 210m OD. The churchyard and surrounding land slopes down to the south. To the north of the church the churchyard ground level is around 1m above internal floor height but the slope in the land means that the south side of the church is at the same height as the

churchyard. Due to the historic nature of the Grade I listed church, with elements dating to the 12th century, a request was made for a programme of archaeological attendance (a watching brief) to take place during the works. The churchyard contains a variety of slate and limestone headstones some of which appear to be still in their original location with many recent stones being from the present century.

The works involved the excavation and laying of a new sewer and water pipe from the north side of the tower, along the northern edge of the north aisle, eastwards across the churchyard and down a narrow pathway opening onto Oakham Road (Fig. 3). Because of the height and slope of the churchyard trenches up to 2m in depth had to be excavated. The works are required to connect a new toilet and sink which have been built inside the north-west corner of the church.

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology is likely to be glaciofluvial sand and gravel overlying Whitby Formation Mudstone.



Figure 1 Site location

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Figure 2 St Peter's church
Looking south-east towards Oakham Road

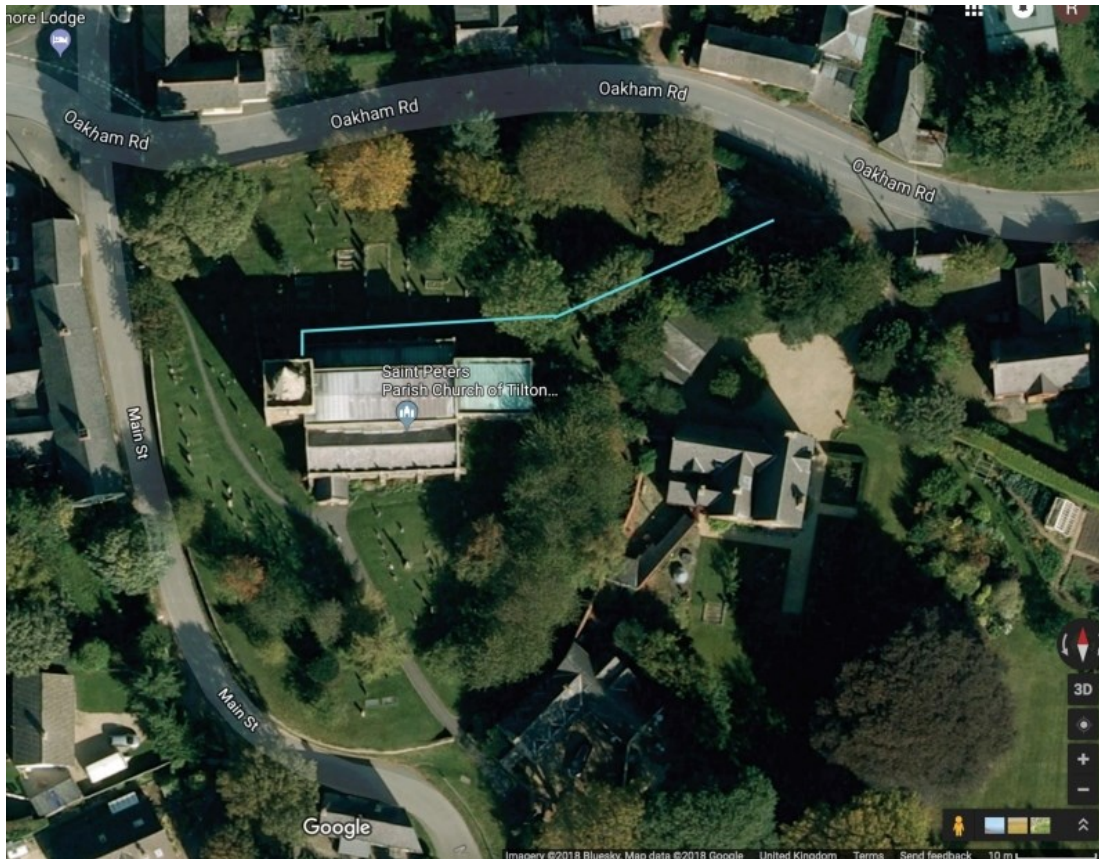


Figure 3 Location plan
Blue line shows proposed line of sewer pipe
Image supplied by client sourced from Google Bluesky Imagery 2018

Background

Tilton on the Hill village lies within the ancient Hundred of East Goscote and the parish once included the nearby hamlets of Whatborough, Halstead and Marefield. The manor was owned by various families throughout the medieval period and was sold by the Digby family, said to be the descendants of Almaer, who is thought to have owned the village before the Norman Conquest, to the Harvey family in 1624. The Harvey family sold it on to Bartholomew Clarke in 1742. Unlike most other villages the Domesday Book notes that Tilton had a priest which could indicate that there was a church building on the site at this time. If such a building existed it would almost certainly have been fairly small in scale and very different to the present church.

The church and churchyard lie within the Conservation Area of Tilton on the Hill which mainly focuses on the area immediately around the church along with the historic village core around Main Street. The church is Grade I listed with the listing information being reproduced in the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation (the WSI). Of most significance for this programme of work is that the earliest parts of the present church building date to the 12th century, this being evident in the south chancel door and tower. The spire is of the Decorated period (approx. 1250-1350) as is the south aisle. The north aisle and arcade were rebuilt at a similar time slightly further to the south, so that the nave is not centred on the tower and chancel. The chancel was remodelled and the clerestory was added in the Perpendicular period (approx. 1350-1550). A restoration was carried out in 1854 by R.C. Hussey. It is not clear if any of these phases of work left any structural remains beyond the limits of the present church building. A blocked doorway can be seen on the north facing elevation of the north aisle which might suggest that other buildings were once present here (Fig. 4). Alternatively this may be the "heathen" north door which has since been blocked.

The churchyard slopes down to the south so that the surrounding graveyard to the south is at a similar level to the floor surface within the church as already noted. However the ground rises on both sides and the north side of the building to such an extent that the churchyard is around 1m higher than the church floor level (Fig. 5). An open brick drainage channel takes rainwater away from the church walls. Modern drains from these channels lead to a series of soakaways located close to the projected line of the new sewer pipe.

Within the churchyard is a Grade II listed medieval cross which lies to the south of the church. Also to the south of the church is a Grade II listed war memorial which was erected in 1920. Neither of these heritage assets are affected by the current works.



Figure 4 North side of the north aisle
Looking south-east. 1m scale. Red arrow points to the blocked north door



Figure 5 North side of the north aisle
Yellow line shows approximate line of pipe trench. Note difference in height of
grassed churchyard and the base of the church walls

Cartographic Evidence

The earliest available map showing Tilton church is the 1841 tithe map of Halstead and Tilton which clearly shows the outline plan of the rather lopsided church as it still exists today (Fig. 6). This would suggest that the 1854 restoration did not alter footprint of the north side of the church in any way. The next available map is the 1886 First Edition Ordnance Survey map which shows the same information as the tithe map and, indeed, the same information as all subsequent editions (Fig. 7). All of the Ordnance Survey maps show a small rectangular structure tucked into the north-east corner of the tower and north aisle which is no longer present. This corresponds with a late 19th century boiler house which was removed and backfilled a number of years ago. A small cellar and entrance to the boiler house was located inside the north-west corner of the church and this has recently been infilled and replaced by a new toilet and sink unit hence the requirement for a new sewer pipe and water supply. A small subterranean archway led from inside the church into the boiler house. This is discussed in more detail in the results section below.

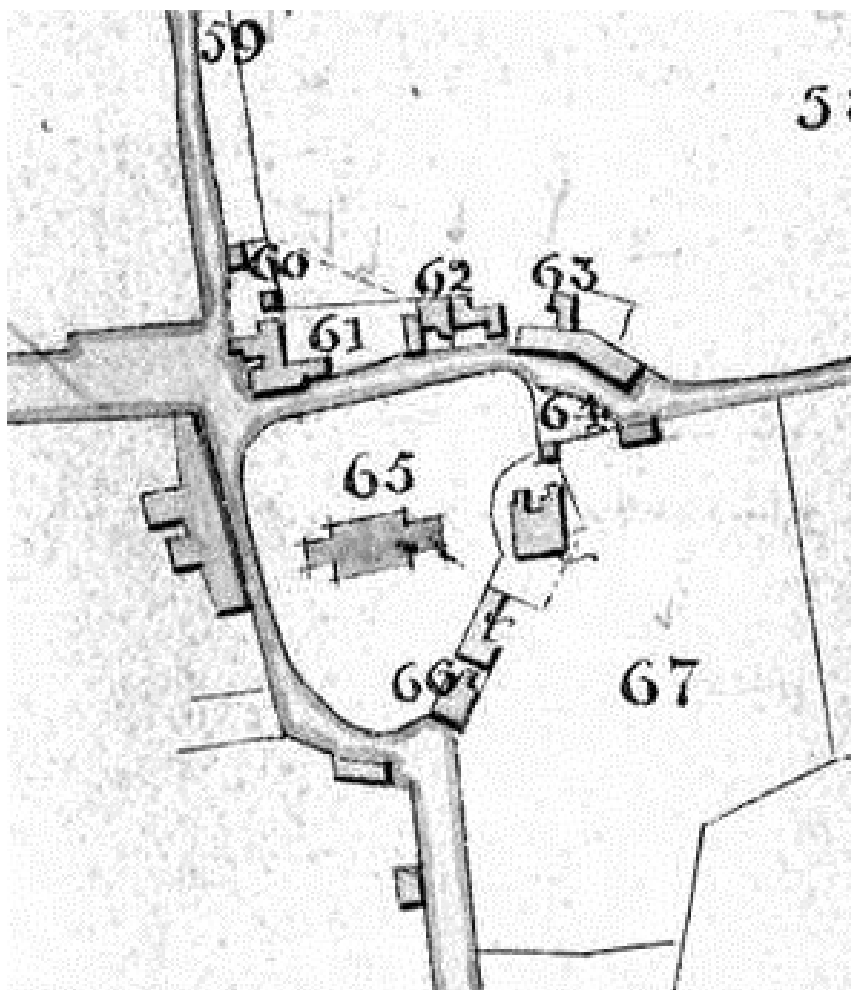


Figure 6 Detail from the 1841 Tithe map of Halstead and Tilton on the Hill North to top of map. Original scale unknown. Plan supplied by J Auterson



Figure 7 Detail from the first edition 1886 Ordnance Survey map of Tilton Sheet XXXIII.9

Objectives

Within the stated objectives of the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation *for archaeological attendance and recording during groundworks at St Peter's Church, Main Street, Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire* (hereafter the WSI).

The specific objectives for this programme of work were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any 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 establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape.
- To recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results
- To produce an archive and report of the results.

Methodology

The trench for the new sewer pipe was excavated using a tracked 360° mini digger fitted with a 0.5m wide toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and/or overburden layers were removed in spits followed by further excavation to the required depth. In order to create the necessary fall in height from below the church floor level down to Oakham Road parts of the trench were excavated to nearly 2m below present ground level. Both spoil and excavated sections were inspected for archaeological features before the sewer pipe and water pipe were laid and the trench backfilled.

Only relatively short lengths of trench were exposed at any one time in order to remove the need to leave open such deep trenches in what is a public area.

Results

As noted the new sewer pipe trench ran from the western side of the north aisle close to the tower before turning eastwards and running alongside the northern edge of the church to meet a narrow pathway leading down to Oakham Road (Fig. 8). For a number of logistical reasons the section from Oakham Road and up the path was dug first followed by the section from the north aisle. For the purposes of this report the results will be described from the church down to the road.

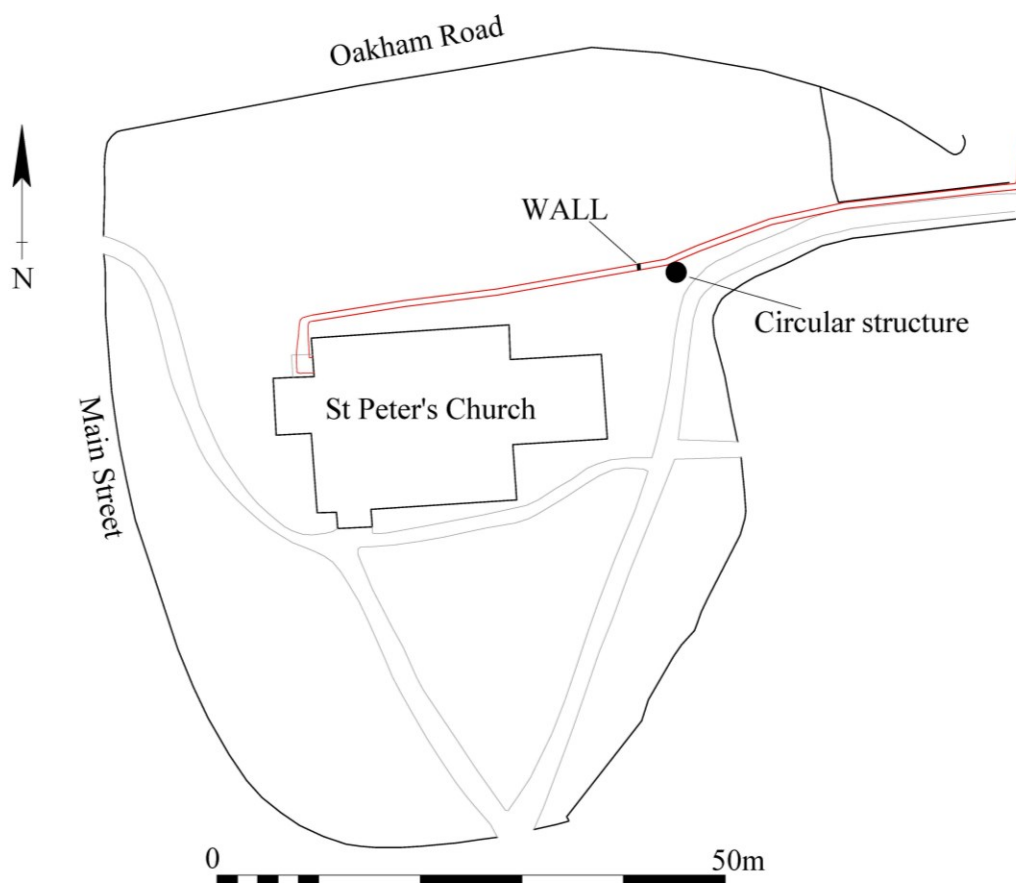


Figure 8 Location of sewer pipe trench
Trench shown by red line

The new internal toilet and sewer pipe had already been installed by different contractors who had backfilled the internal cellar after running the new sewer and water pipes through the existing archway approximately 1.6m below present ground level in the north aisle west wall (Fig. 9). The new pipe running from the arch was quite difficult to locate and an initial exploratory slot was dug to the north of the boiler house wall which revealed the top of a possible articulated burial which appeared to have been cut by the construction of the north aisle. The burial, which was just over 1.2m below current ground level, was not disturbed by this work and was re-covered with soil. The 19th century external boiler house was a brick and stone-built structure butting against the north aisle west wall and had been backfilled with late 20th century debris along with apparently scavenged soil from elsewhere in the churchyard. This backfill consisted of a homogenous grey-brown silty sandy clay similar in nature to the rest of the churchyard soil.

Because the archway and new pipes were so deep where they exited the church the rest of the sewer pipe leading to Oakham Road had to be correspondingly deep in order to create the necessary fall. A slot also had to be cut through the north wall of the boiler house to bring the new pipes into the church yard. A number of dressed pieces of limestone were observed within this wall which appears to have incorporated any available stone to construct it. This stone may have originated from earlier phases of church building or it may have been deliberately imported onto the site to build the boiler house. Of note among these stones was a fragment of dressed stone with possible glazing slots cut into it (Fig. 10). Another small fragment appeared to be part of a narrow circular shaft moulding, again made of limestone. The dressed stones were replaced back in the trench with the excavated spoil but the stone shown in Figure 10 below and the moulded shaft fragment were retained by the Churchwardens.

The new sewer trench was then excavated northwards beyond the building line of the church before turning eastwards along the edge of the grassed slope (Fig. 11). The trench, with a depth between approximately 1.6 and 1.9m below current ground level, encountered a modern plastic rainwater pipe running out from the church gutters at around 1m below current ground level. A number of stone-filled soakaways served these pipes. The rainwater pipe was reinstated before backfilling the trench.

Beneath the turf the ground consisted of a homogenous mid brown silty sandy clay with frequent disarticulated human bone throughout. A number of coffin fittings and handles were also found. All of the bone and coffin fittings were reburied in the pipe trench shortly before each section was backfilled. Close to the base of the trench patches of mid-yellow-brown sandy clay and gravel were observed. This was the undisturbed natural substratum.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered along the trench as it ran alongside the north aisle wall. However, approximately 4m beyond the north end of the north aisle the top of a drystone wall was observed 1.55m below current ground level (Figs. 8, 12 and 13). This 0.2m wide and 0.4m high wall, built from unworked locally sourced ironstone, consisted of four courses resting on the natural sandy gravel substratum 1.95m below current ground level. No apparent construction cut for this north to south oriented wall could be seen nor were any datable finds recovered from around it. The top of the wall was just over 0.2m higher than the road level which was

at a height of 210.6m AoD. Because of the depth, narrowness and potential for collapse of the trench walls this feature was photographed but not drawn.

Approximately 2.5m to the east of the stone wall was a circular brick-built well-like structure with a slate cap 0.6m below current ground level. This was first thought to be a 1m diameter brick-lined well which had silted up but in fact turned out to be a relatively modern soakaway structure serving the rainwater pipes from the church gutters. The bricks had LBC stamped in their frogs standing for London Brick Company and were of 20th century origin. This feature was avoided by deviating the new sewer pipe around it. It was therefore not excavated or disturbed.

To the east of the circular soakaway feature the ground dropped down alongside a narrow pathway leading to Oakham Road. At the eastern edge of the main churchyard the pathway passed through a gap between the churchyard boundary fence and a drystone wall. Within the upper fill of the trench were a number of unworked ironstone fragments which may be part of this boundary wall which may have been partially demolished to create the pathway. No other evidence of this possible boundary were found. However, to the east of the wall the homogenous mid brown silty sandy clay only extended down to 1m below current ground level which may suggest some difference in use either side of the wall. Below this was the natural substrata consisting of yellow-brown sandy silty clay and gravel with areas of densely-packed ironstone brash. Some fragments of human bone were still to be found in the upper fill all the way down to the road. No archaeological features or deposits were seen in this section of the trench.



Figure 9 Archway from inside the church into backfilled boiler house
Looking east. 1m scale. North aisle wall at top of picture, tower wall on right



Figure 10 Worked stone recovered from boiler house wall
Top left: possible glazing slots. Top right: dressed face of the same stone. 0.5m scale
Lower picture: fragment of moulded shaft



Figure 11 Sewer trench being excavated eastwards
Looking east



Figure 12 North to south wall
Looking east. 1 and 0.5m scales

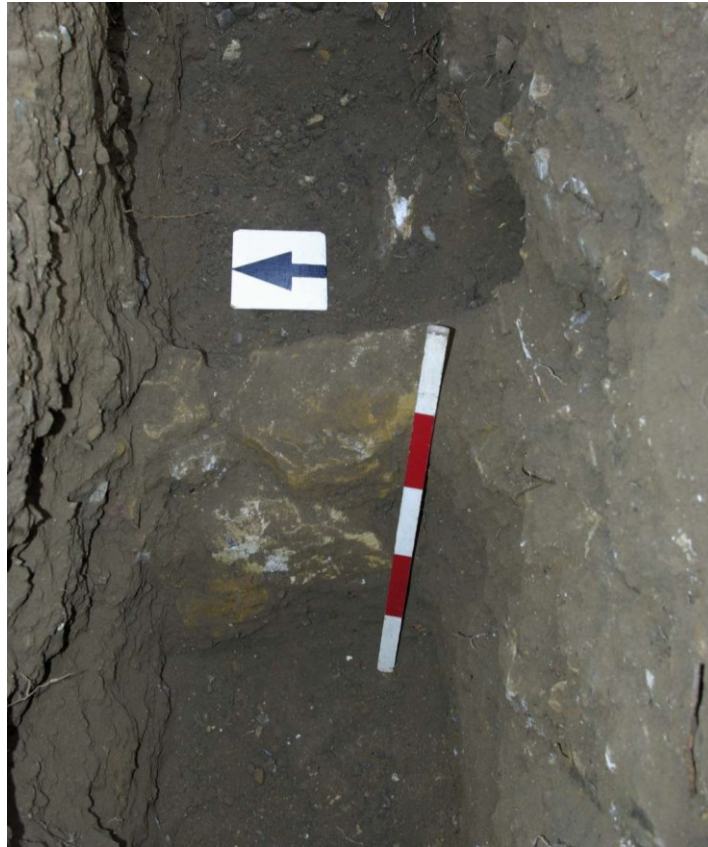


Figure 13 North to south wall
Looking east. 0.5m scale



Figure 14 Trench along pathway to Oakham Road
Looking west

Discussion

No earlier phases of church building were exposed during the excavation of the new sewer pipe. As would be expected in a churchyard there were many human bones found during the work but none belonged to articulated burials.

The north to south drystone wall seen near to the north-eastern corner of the church is interesting and may belong to an earlier boundary wall. It seems unlikely to belong to any earlier building as it is only 0.2m wide and would probably not be strong enough to support even a timber superstructure. Being set on the natural substratum and its depth below current ground level suggests that it is of some age and may well be associated with the pre-12th century church. Projecting the line of the wall to the north and south shows that it does not correspond with any current boundaries of buildings which again may suggest an early construction date.

The worked stone is interesting and may be remnants from earlier parts of the church building. It may be possible that the dressed stone is from elsewhere although it does appear to be from a relatively high-status building which has glazing. The fragment of moulded shaft is very small making it difficult to identify but it would appear to have been broken from a larger piece of moulded stone removed from the earlier building during the remodelling of the chancel and clerestory in the late 14th century.

Archive

The archive consists of:

This report,

Six A4 ULAS pro-forma watching brief forms,

One A4 photo record sheet,

One ULAS pro-forma masonry record sheet,

Two A4 contact sheets of the digital photographs taken during the work,

One CD containing the digital photographs taken during the work.

Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the members of St Peter's Church Tilton on the Hill for their interest and assistance during the work. Some useful background information and the 1841 Tithe map information was supplied by J Auterson. Also to AJET the contractors who carried out the work. The project was managed by J Thomas and the fieldwork carried out by A Hyam.

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Appendix 1 OASIS Information

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|-----------------------|---------------|
| PROJECT DETAILS | Oasis No | universi1-330778 | | |
| | Project Name | Archaeological attendance and recording during groundworks at St Peter's Church, Main St, Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire | | |
| | Start/end dates of field work | 01-10-2018 – 08-10-2018 | | |
| | Previous/Future Work | Yes / Not known | | |
| | Project Type | Watching brief | | |
| | Site Status | Grade I listed church | | |
| | Current Land Use | churchyard | | |
| | Monument Type/Period | Possible medieval wall | | |
| | Significant Finds/Period | None | | |
| | Development Type | Drainage/sewer pipes | | |
| | Reason for Investigation | DAC/PCC | | |
| | Position in the Planning Process | N/A | | |
| Planning Ref. | N/A | | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | Site Address/Postcode | Main Street, Tilton on the Hill. LE7 9LB | | |
| | Study Area | 80m ² | | |
| | Site Coordinates | SK 74341 05655 | | |
| | Height OD | 210m OD | | |
| PROJECT CREATORS | Organisation | ULAS | | |
| | Project Brief Originator | DAC | | |
| | Project Design Originator | ULAS | | |
| | Project Manager | J Thomas | | |
| | Project Director/Supervisor | A Hyam | | |
| | Sponsor/Funding Body | Developer / PCC of St Peter's, Tilton on the Hill | | |
| PROJECT ARCHIVE | | Physical | Digital | Paper |
| | Recipient | NA | LCC MusService | LCCMusService |
| | ID (Acc. No.) | | X.A104.2018 | X.A104.2018 |
| | Contents | | Photos Survey data | Field Notes |
| PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY | Type | Grey Literature (unpublished) | | |
| | Title | Archaeological attendance and recording during groundworks at St Peter's Church, Main St, Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire | | |
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| | Description | Developer Report A4 pdf | | |

Appendix 2 Site Attendance Record

| | |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| 1.10.2018 | Half day on site (morning) |
| 2.10.2018 | Full day on site |
| 3.10.2018 | Half day on site (morning) |
| 4.10.2018 | Full day on site |
| 5.10.2018 | Full day on site |
| 8.10.2018 | Full day on site |



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
UK

Directors

Dr Richard Buckley OBE BA PhD FSA MCifA

e: rjb16@le.ac.uk

t: +44 (0)116 252 2848

f: +44 (0)116 252 2614

e: ulas@le.ac.uk



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