

**ST PETER'S CHURCH  
GOLDHANGER  
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF  
GROUNDWORKS FOR A NORTH EXTENSION**



**Essex County Council  
Field Archaeology Unit**

**December 2010**

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF  
GROUNDWORKS FOR A NORTH EXTENSION**

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## EHER Summary Sheet

<b>Site Name/Address:</b> St Peter's Church, Goldhanger, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Goldhanger	<b>District:</b> Maldon
<b>NGR:</b> TL 6051 0885	<b>Site Code:</b> GOSP 10
<b>Type of Work:</b> Archaeological Monitoring	<b>Site Director/Team:</b> Andy Letch ECC FAU
<b>Date of Work:</b> September 2010	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> 6 x 7m extension & drainage trenches
<b>Curating Museum:</b> Colchester	<b>Funding Source:</b> St Peter's Parochial Church Council
<b>Further Work Anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related HER Nos.</b> HER 13450-13452; Grade 1 listed (LBS 118861)
<b>Final Report:</b> Summary in EAH	<b>OASIS No.</b> 90312

**Periods Represented:** Medieval & post-medieval (Victorian)

### SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:

Archaeological monitoring was carried out on groundworks associated with the construction of a new meeting room on the north side of St Peter's Church (fig. 1). The main part of the church, the nave and chancel, was built in the 11th century, while the tower and south aisle probably date to the 14th century (LBS 118861). The ground on the north side is artificially high and falls slightly away from the church to the north wall of the churchyard.

Approximately 88 burials were found, most of which were encountered on the north side of the church, where excavation was deepest. Although there were no gravestones here, Victorian gravestones from the 1870s that stand against the nearby churchyard wall are likely to have occupied the area in the past.

The area of the extension (5.8m x 6.8m) was initially reduced by 1m to form a flat working area. 1m-wide wall foundation trenches were then dug around the edges to a maximum depth of 2m from ground level (plate 1). The trench revealed a thin (0.2m) layer of brownish-grey sandy silt topsoil (context 1) over a deep (0.66m) dark brown gravelly silty sand soil layer containing fragments of mortar and tile (context 2) likely to date from a church refurbishment in 1853. Below this was an earlier graveyard soil (context 3) of similar depth. It was in this layer that the graves were found, between 1.1m below ground level and the top of the hard orange gravel natural at 1.6m (i.e. between 3½ and 5½ ft). The graves were neatly laid-out in rows on a west to east alignment, as would be expected (fig. 1). Most were adults (plate 2), buried with their spouses, but there were also many adolescents and children and some babies, who were always buried closest to the church. The positions of the graves were marked on a plan and those bones within the trench were lifted and bagged individually for re-burial at a later date. Where possible, graves were left undisturbed.

Drainage trenches and soakaways were dug to the west and east of the foundation trenches revealing further burials to the same pattern and density. A pipe run, with a fall to the west from 1.1m to 1.45m, was dug across the churchyard to link up to existing services on Church Street (fig. 1). Because of its shallower depth, fewer graves were discovered. Along the

trench the natural orange gravel was interrupted by brickearth deposits. An unstratified sherd of Early Medieval Ware, datable to the 12th to earlier 13th century, was retrieved.

The church footings were examined during the course of the monitoring works and found to be quite shallow. They were slightly stepped out from the church and comprised three courses of flint and squared limestone bonded in a light yellow lime mortar (plate 3).

Based on the presence of 19th to 20th-century pottery, Victorian coffin fittings and the largely planned layout, none of the recorded graves would appear to pre-date the Victorian period. The deepest graves cut the hard natural gravel subsoil and go no further, meaning that all those discovered were less than the 6 foot depth commonly associated with later burials, and some almost half that. The only archaeologically interesting find was the single sherd of unstratified medieval pottery, which represents the only material not associated with either the graves or refurbishment works to the church in the 1850s.

**Previous Summaries/Reports:** None

**Author of Summary:** Andrew Letch

**Date of Summary:** 23rd December 2010



Plate 1 Foundation trench for north extension viewed to south



Plate 2 Skeleton in grave 14 in north part of foundation trench



Plate 3 Church footings

