

HERITAGE NETWORK



CHURCH of St. THOMAS à BECKET Northaw, Herts.

(HN455)

Archaeological Monitoring Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

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Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

CHURCH of St. THOMAS à BECKET Northaw, Herts.

HN455

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Northaw Parochial Church Council

by

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Contents

	Summary	Page i
Section 1	Introduction.....	Page 1
Section 2	Fieldwork.....	Page 1
Section 3	Discussion & conclusions.....	Page 2
Section 4	Schedule of Site Visits	Page 3
Section 5	Illustrations.....	following Page 3

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for the present project was carried out by Karin Semmelmann. The report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Donald Buttress, architect; Lodge & Son, church restorers; and David Baker, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	St. Thomas à Becket Church, Northaw, Hertfordshire.		
County:	Hertfordshire	District:	Welwyn/Hatfield
Village/town:	Northaw	Parish:	Northaw and Cuffley CP
Planning reference:	N/a	NGR:	TL 27904 02317
Client name and address:	Northaw PCC, c/o Butler Fuller Alsop Williams, 31-33 Princes St., Manchester, M2 4BF		
Nature of work:	New service trenches	Present land use:	Churchyard
Size of affected area:	20m ²	Size of area investigated:	20m ²
Site Code:	HN455	Other reference:	N/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Type of work:	Monitoring	Finds location/Museum:	Mill Green Museum
Start of work	8 March 2004	Finish of work	17 March 2004
Related SMR Nos:	N/a	Periods represented:	Post-medieval
Previous summaries/reports:	N/a		

Synopsis: Following the requirements of the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council for Northaw, to carry out a programme of archaeological monitoring of drainage trenches being excavated in the churchyard of the Church of St. Thomas à Becket.

The present church is the third to have been built on the site. It dates from 1882, when it was built to replace the early 19th century church, which had been destroyed by fire.

Little evidence for the medieval church was revealed during the groundworks, other than fragments of possible construction material. Evidence for the early 19th century church was more abundant, and suggested that it was at least partially brick-built and probably on a slightly different alignment to the present structure.

1 Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of the *Northaw Parochial Church Council* as part of a programme of archaeological monitoring of service trenches excavated to the west and the north of St. Thomas à Becket Church, Northaw, Herts. The work was carried out in accordance with a Briefing Note prepared by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser for the Diocese of St Albans (ref. DB 6 March 2004).

1.2 The site is located towards the western end of the village (Fig.1), centred on TL 27904 02317.

1.3 The present church was constructed in 1882, and is the third known church on the site. By the early 19th century, the Norman church had become too small and a replacement was built by the Lord of the Manor, William Strode, in 1810. This building was destroyed by fire in 1881, leading to the construction of the present church in the Early English style in 1882.

1.4 The aim of the project has been monitor all aspects of the groundworks programme which were considered likely to affect any underlying archaeological remains. All exposed potential archaeological features and deposits were investigated, and artefactual elements were retrieved to allow the date, character and significance of the site to be assessed, subject to the limitations of reasonable safety and practicality.

2 Fieldwork

2.1 The service trenches were hand dug, and were between 0.30m and 0.47m wide, reaching a maximum depth of 0.65m (Fig.2).

2.2 The trenches revealed a series of masonry remains, as well as a former path, a probable floor surface, a dump deposit and an area of disturbance.

2.3 The dump deposit [01] lay 0.50m west of the west wall in Trench A and was approximately 0.95m long (Fig.3). It consisted of lime and cement mortar, brick, tile, slate, Totternhoe clunch and a fragment of worked limestone, probably from the Clipsham quarry.

2.4 An area of disturbance was observed in the southern end of Trench D, beyond which lay a possible footing [07]. This was made of flint with some brick, and was apparent in both sections. The brick within this feature appeared to be the same as that observed in the more substantial masonry remains (see below).

2.5 A wall formed of two courses of red and yellow bricks, context [02], was encountered in Trench B, to the west of the church (Fig.3). The bricks measured 27 x 7.5cm (10 x 3 inches), and were set in lime mortar. The wall was approximately 0.66m wide and rested on a brick foundation, which was only 0.37m wide and extended beyond the eastern trench edge.

2.6 A second wall, context [03], which was constructed of similar brick, was revealed in the north facing section of Trench C. In contrast to wall [02], the mortar in this structure was cement based. The wall was slightly bowed and measured 2.15m in length and 0.40m in height. A grave slab had been placed on top of this wall, possibly as a means of consolidating the buttress that was partially constructed on top of the wall.

2.7 Two masonry features, context [04], were present to the east of wall [03]. These were constructed of similar brick, together with hard stone and cement mortared flint. Although the nature of the remains and their proximity to a later drain pipe initially suggested that these may have been culverts, further excavation revealed that they were probably footings.

2.8 The remains of another wall, context [06], made of red brick set in a lime mortar, were revealed towards the eastern end of the church. The wall was approximately 0.80m wide, and was set at an angle to the present church.

2.9 Between footings [04] and wall [06] were the remains of a brick and clunch floor, context [05], approximately 0.67m in length. The bricks were similar in colour and size to those in the walls [02] and [06], and were also set in a lime mortar.

3 Discussion & conclusions

3.1 The building debris within dump deposit [01] included Totternhoe clunch, which may well have been one of the construction materials of the medieval church, as well as brick and cement mortar. As cement mortar was not generally used until the latter part of the 19th century, its presence suggests that deposition may have occurred around the time of the construction of the present church.

3.2 The walls outside the western elevation of the church, and at the eastern end of the church contexts [02] and [06], both appeared to have been associated with a different phase of construction. Both structures were bonded with a lime mortar, suggesting that they pre-date the latter part of the 19th century. In addition, wall [06] was set at an angle to the present church. If this wall relates to the 1810 church, it is possible that this had been built on a slightly different orientation to the present building, and this could also reflect the orientation of the medieval church.

3.3 Photographic evidence suggests that feature [02] may have been part of one of the piers belonging to the elongated porch that ran from the west door of the 1810 church to the church gate. Its location, directly opposite the west door rather than being offset from it, also suggests that the present church was not built on the same footprint as the earlier church.

3.4 Floor [05] appears also to belong to this phase of construction, as the bricks were similar to those in features [02] and [06], and the mortar was lime based. The poor quality of the floor suggests that this was not likely to have been within the main church building, but may have been the floor of an associated building such as a vestry.

3.5 The brick wall to the north of the church, [03], was also constructed with the same sort of bricks as observed elsewhere, but these were set in a cement mortar. The wall is therefore no earlier than the latter part of the 19th century, but no later than 1887 when the north aisle was constructed. The location and the late 19th century date of the wall suggests that this may have been part of a vault. Whether the grave slab which now partially overlies it was ever an integral part of the vault is unclear.

3.6 The disturbed nature of the evidence associated with footings [07] to the north of the church, and the disturbed area immediately to its south, means that their history is unclear. The flint footings appear to belong to an earlier and less substantial wall. The width and quality of the footings may suggest that this was once a boundary wall, rather than part of an earlier church building.

Conclusion

3.7 The evidence collected in the course of the present project suggests that the early 19th century church was at least partially built of brick, and was possibly on a slightly different alignment to the present structure.

3.8 The possible vault [03] is of particular interest, as it was constructed from the same type of brick as proposed for the 1810 church, but clearly at a later date. It predated the construction of the north aisle in 1887, and was either built from brick acquired from the same source as those used in the earlier structure, or from reclaimed.

3.9 The evidence for the medieval church was limited to possible construction material including Totternhoe clunch and, possibly, Clipsham limestone.

Schedule of Site Visits

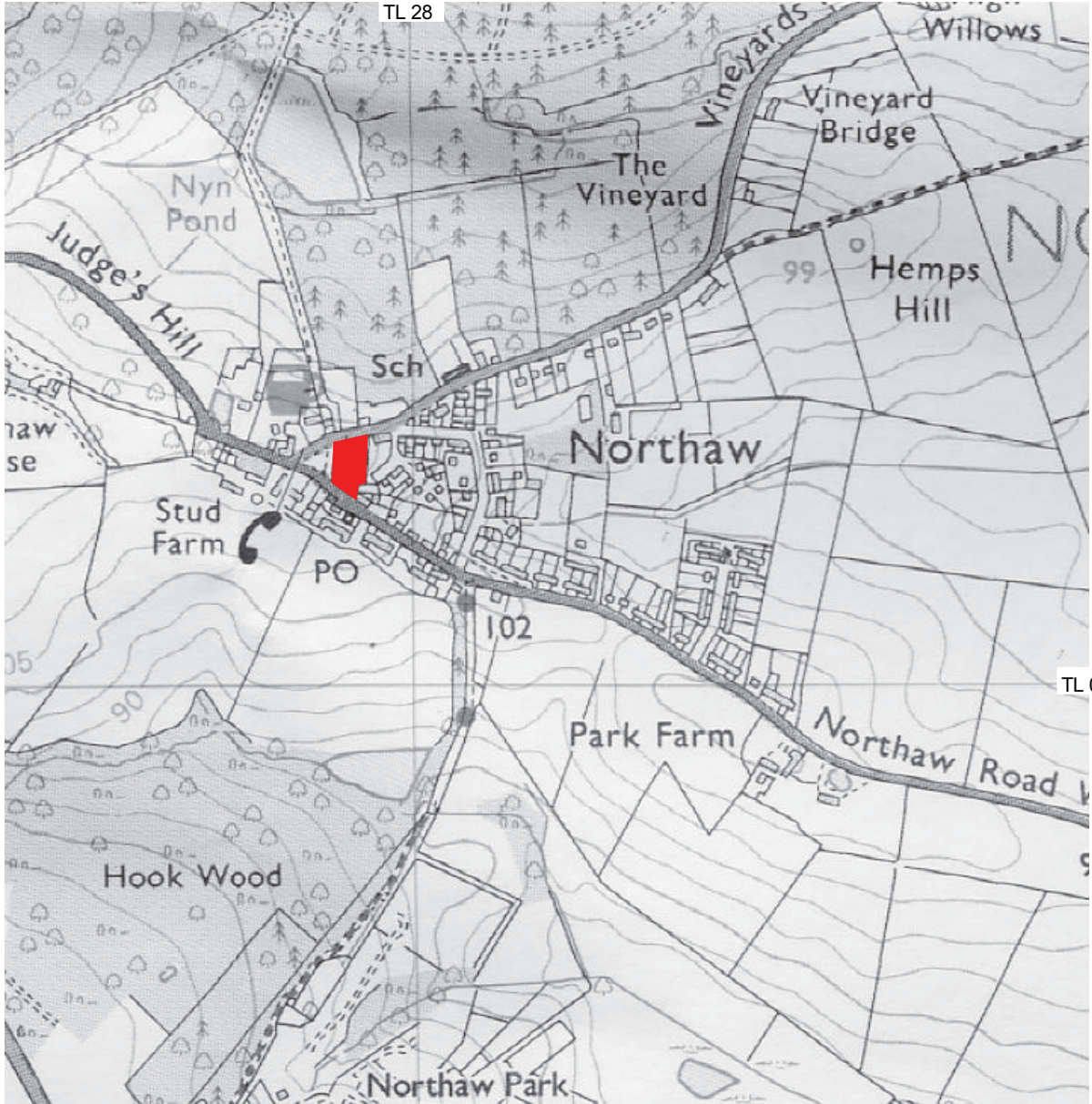
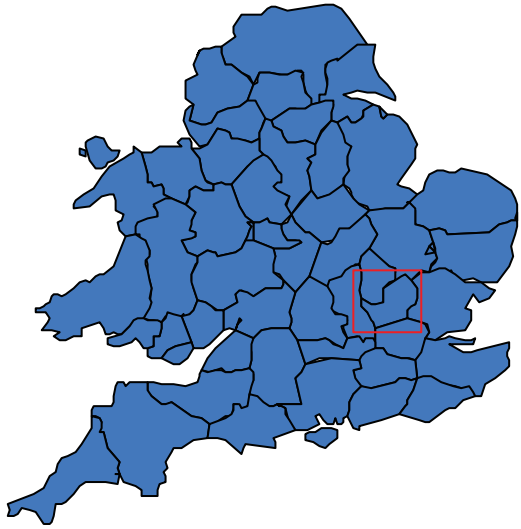
Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
08/03/04	KS	3	Inspect Trench A
10/03/04	KS	6	Inspect Trenches B & C
17/03/04	KS	4	Inspect Trenches C & D

Illustrations

Figure 1Site location plan

Figure 2Site layout

Figure 3Features [01] & [02]

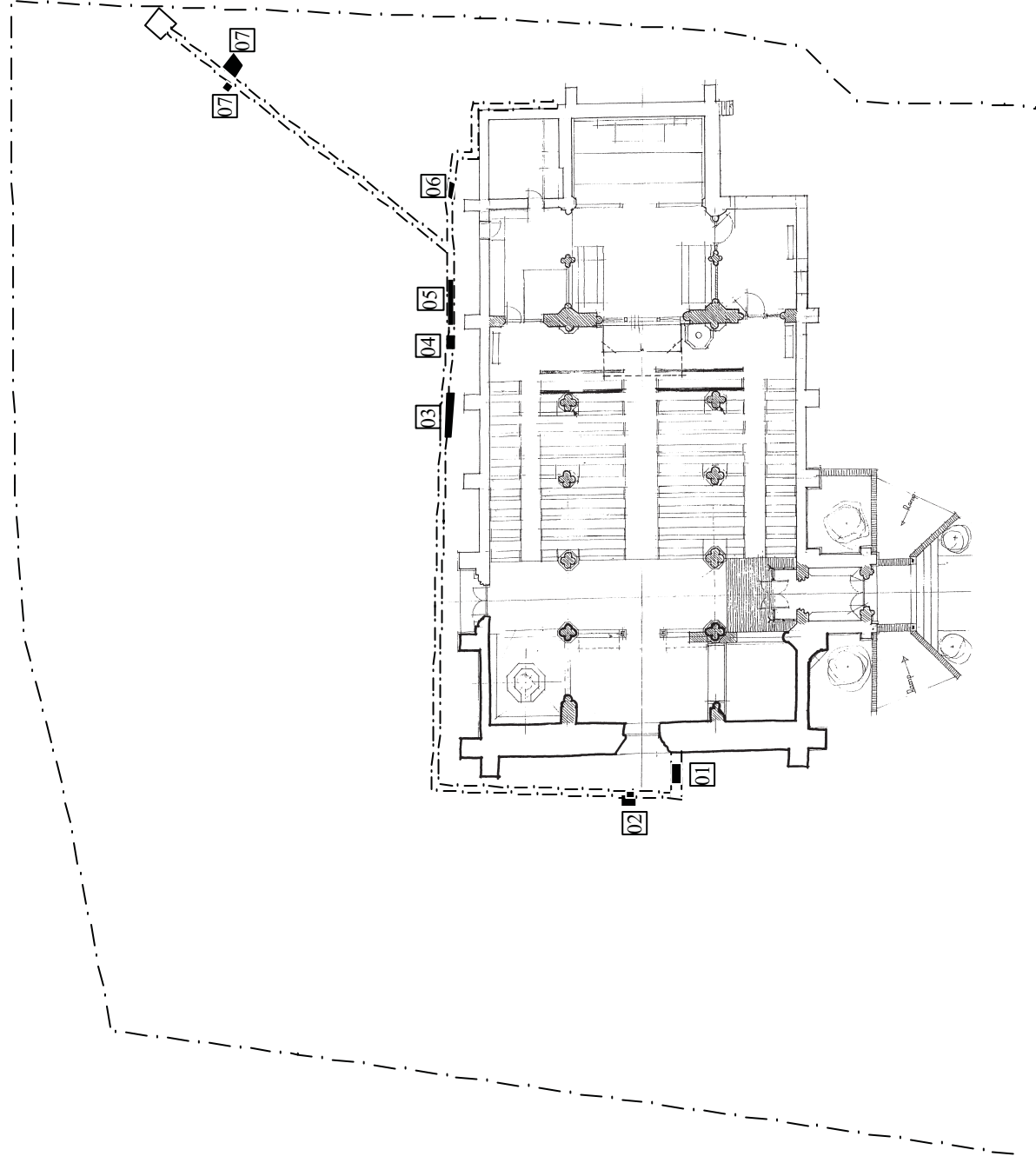


Site Location

Scale 1:10000

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Figure 1

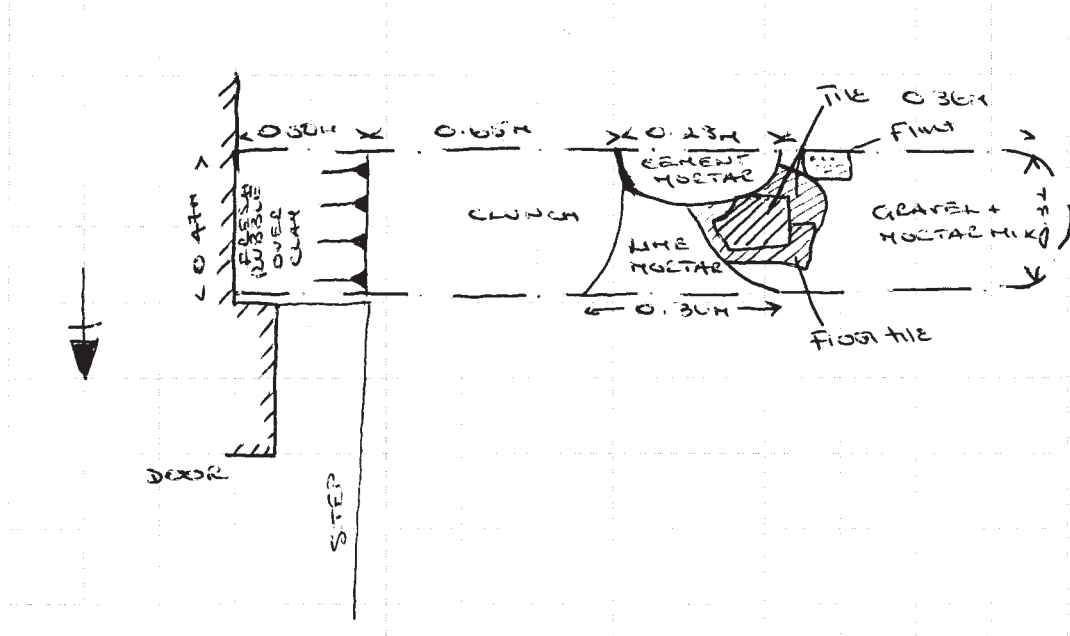


Site layout

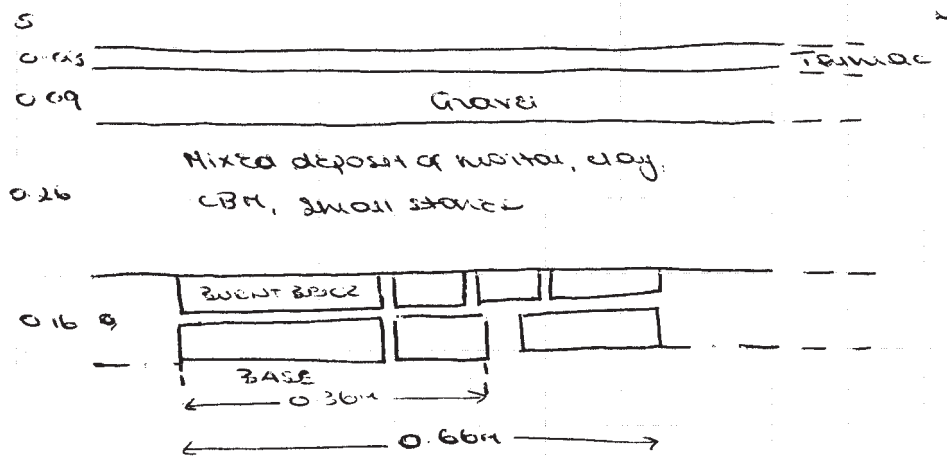
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Figure 2

Plan of [01]



East facing section of [02]



Plan of [02]

