

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
St Michael's Church, Offham  
Kent**

**NGR: 566025 158057**

**ASE Project No: 160767**

**Site Code: SMC16**

**ASE Report No: 2017258**

**OASIS id: archaeol6-267272**




**By Gary Webster**

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<b>Revision:</b>			

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Thomas Ford & Partners to undertake an archaeological watching brief during manual excavations for a new soakaway and pipe trench at St Michael's Church, Offham, Kent.*

*The watching brief on the excavations for the soakaway and associated pipe trench did not uncover any archaeological features, however several finds were identified. Several human long bones and two skulls were seen, one of which was only partial, and another which could have been part of a full inhumation, however it was left in situ. Other finds were identified, including a residual piece of Roman pottery, a coffin grip used from the 1700's onwards, Ceramic Building Material (CBM) from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century onwards and pottery from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Thomas Ford & Partners to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a new soakaway at St Michael's Church, Offham, Kent (NGR 566025 158057; Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 St Michael's Church lies c.800m north of the centre of Offham, on the east side of Church Road. The drainage works were undertaken within the churchyard, to the north-west of the church.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

- 1.2.1 The geology of the site is Lower Greensand: Sandstone and Mudstone. Superficial deposits are not mapped (BGS 2016).

### **1.3 Planning Background**

- 1.3.1 The PCC applied to Faculty for permission for the works, which are part of a broader suite of HLF-funded improvements to the church. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by ASE prior to the commencement of fieldwork (ASE 2016).
- 1.3.2 A previous archaeological watching brief was carried out of a test pit over a 1m<sup>3</sup> area. This excavation found a small number of human remains, which were left in situ.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.4.1 The general objective of the archaeological watching brief was to record archaeological deposits exposed by the groundworks and ensure that any features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the works were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.
- 1.4.2 A further aim was to make public the results of the archaeological watching brief subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

### **1.5 Scope of Report**

- 1.5.1 This report details the findings of the archaeological watching brief carried out on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017. The archaeological work was undertaken by Gary Webster (Archaeologist). The project was managed by Paul Mason (fieldwork) and by Jim Stevenson and Dan Swift (post-excavation).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The following background information has been supplied by the client.
- 2.2 St. Michael's is a small church of early Norman origin, adjacent to a large farm complex north of the main village centre. It comprises a tall nave with some original Norman windows, south porch, a surprisingly large C13 chancel with tower to the north with vestry at its base and 15<sup>th</sup> century belfry stage.
- 2.3 There is evidence, both internally and externally, of a 13<sup>th</sup> century south arcade to the nave for an aisle, which must have been removed by the time the 14<sup>th</sup> century south porch was constructed.
- 2.4 The church was restored by Joseph Clarke in 1872-3, when the main east window was inserted, and extensively repaired 1927-8 by Edmund Cobb. Mainly the roofs are tiled with a lead roof to the tower with a copper covered access hatch. The walls are built of random rubble stonework, mostly Kentish ragstone but incorporating tiles and tufa blocks, including some of the quoins. There is extensive early herringbone-pattern stonework to the north elevation of the nave. The copings to the south porch and tower parapet are cast concrete with a coarse exposed aggregate, and the inside faces of the tower parapet are rendered. Some of the windows were restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century using Bath and Wealden Sandstone, but an original 14<sup>th</sup> century window survives to the east elevation of the tower. Internally the plaster has been removed from the wall arches in both the chancel and vestry, exposing uncut stone dressings. The lower parts of the chancel walls have been replastered in a hard, impervious mix.
- 2.5 There is mains electricity and gas, and a lightning conductor to the tower. The church sits within a large churchyard within a rural setting.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Fieldwork Methodology**

- 3.1.1 The soakaway and pipe trench were excavated in the proposed location with no alterations to the size or shape made (Figure 2).
- 3.1.2 The turf was cut out by hand over the area of the soakaway and the pipe trench. The remaining excavation was carried out by mini digger. It was excavated under archaeological supervision down to the formation level.
- 3.1.3 Both geological and archaeological deposits were recorded using standard ASE watching brief/context sheets. A digital photographic record was also made.
- 3.1.4 The spoil heap and opened excavations were scanned by eye for any unstratified finds.
- 3.1.5 Any human remains uncovered were gathered, placed in a finds bag adjacent to where they were excavated and reburied as close as possible to where they were disturbed.
- 3.1.6 The area of the soakaway overlapped slightly with the previously excavated test pit. The same contexts were identified.

#### **3.2 The Site Archive**

- 3.2.1 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE in Portslade, East Sussex and will be deposited at a local museum in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	4
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	0
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	2
Permatrace sheets	0
Trench Record Forms	0

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

#### 4.0 RESULTS (figure 3)

##### 4.1 Soakaway and pipe trench monitored on 15/05/17

Context	Type	Description	Deposit Thickness m
001	Layer	Topsoil	0.14 - 0.2m
002	Layer	Made ground	0.10 – 0.12m
003	Layer	Subsoil	0.08m
004	Layer	Cemetery soil	0.60m+

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

- 4.1.1 The soakaway was located at the north-west end of the church and measured 2.2m x 1.25m and 1.0m in depth. The pipe trench was 7.9m in length, 0.36m wide and c.0.62m deep.
- 4.1.2 The cemetery soil [004] was a red-brown sand. Several pieces of disarticulated human bone were identified, including one radius, two femurs, two partial skulls and the remains of a pelvis. These were all reburied. Two large pieces of unworked ragstone were also identified, but not retained. Sealing this was subsoil [003]; a dark brown/green silty-sand. Above the subsoil was a chalky layer of made ground [002] with frequent Ceramic Building Material (CBM) and modern ceramics throughout. This layer may have been formed as a levelling or consolidation horizon. Topsoil [001] consisted of dark brown/black loose silt.



## 5.0 THE FINDS

### 5.1 Summary

5.1.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the watching brief at St Michaels Church, Offham. Not all finds identified were taken from the site; only a representative sample of the CBM was retained. All finds were washed and dried or air dried as appropriate. They were subsequently quantified by count and weight and were bagged by material and context (Table 3). A single object, detailed in section 5.4, was assigned a unique registered find number. All finds have been packed and stored following ClfA guidelines (2014).

Context	Pottery	Weight (g)	CBM	Weight (g)	Plaster	Weight (g)
1	1	5	2	98		
2					2	581
4	1	3	4	914		
Total	2	8	6	1012	2	581

Table 3: Finds quantification

### 5.2 The Roman Pottery by Anna Doherty

5.2.1 A single sherd of Roman pottery was found as a residual element in context [004] which also contained post-medieval material. It is a bodysherd in North Kent fine grey ware, a fabric typically associated with vessels dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD.

### 5.3 The Post-Roman Pottery by Trista Clifford

5.3.1 A single sherd of cream glazed earthenware weighing 5g was recovered from context [001]. A date range of mid -18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century is probable. The fragment is recommended for discard.

### 5.4 The Building Material

5.4.1 A total of six tile fragments and two large chunks of mortar collectively weighing 1593g were collected from three contexts: [001, 002, and 004]. All the material was quantified by form, weight and fabric and recorded on standard recording forms; this information was then entered into a digital Excel database. Fabrics were distinguished by eye, and at least three were apparent, described in Table 4. Peg tile is difficult to date as an artefact type, as it changes very little in form between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the presence of cement mortar indicates the later 19<sup>th</sup> century at least, and in this instance a more recent, 20<sup>th</sup> century + date is more likely

5.4.2 Of the fabric types, T1 appeared the most recent, and the presence of modern plaster render on the base surface of the T1 fragment from [004] supports this assertion. The assemblage as a whole most likely represents 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century debris, and is of limited archaeological value. For this reason the tile and mortar has been discarded.

Fabric	Description
T1	Hard fired pink-red fabric.
T2	Pinky-orange fabric with sparse pale marbling.
T3	Sandy and gritty fabric.

Table 4: Roof tile fabric descriptions

## **5.5 The Registered Find** by Trista Clifford

- 5.5.1 A single complete iron coffin grip, RF<1>, weighing 56g and measuring 140mm in length was recovered from context [4]. The grip is undecorated and slightly thickened at the lowest point of the drop. The hinge sockets appear to be simple iron loops. The type is commonplace from around 1700 onwards.

## 6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The watching brief on the excavations for the soakaway and associated pipe trench did not uncover any archaeological features, however several finds were identified. Human long bones and two skulls were seen, one of which was only partial, and another which could have been part of a full inhumation, however it was left in situ. Other finds were identified, including a residual piece of Roman pottery, a coffin grip used from the 1700's onwards, Ceramic Building Material (CBM) from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards and pottery from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

ASE 2016 Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at St Michael's Church, Offham, Kent

BGS 2016, <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 14/9/16

ClfA 2014. *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ASE would like to thank Thomas Ford & Partners for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project.

**HER Summary**

Site Code	SMC16				
Identification Name and Address	St Michael's Church, Offham, Kent				
County, District &/or Borough	Kent				
OS Grid Refs.	NGR: 566025 158057				
Geology	The geology of the site is Lower Greensand: Sandstone and Mudstone.				
Arch. South-East Project Number	160767				
Type of Fieldwork			Watching Brief		
Type of Site				Other, Cemetery	
Dates of Fieldwork			WB. 15/06/17		
Sponsor/Client	Thomas Ford & Partners				
Project Manager	Paul Mason				
Project Supervisor	Gary Webster				
Period Summary					
		MED	PM	Other Modern	
<p>Summary</p> <p><i>The watching brief on the excavations for the soakaway and associated pipe trench did not uncover any archaeological features, however several finds were identified. Several human long bones and two skulls were seen, one of which was only partial, and another which could have been part of a full inhumation, however it was left in situ Other finds were identified, including a residual piece of Roman pottery, a coffin grip used from the 1700's onwards, Ceramic Building Material (CBM) from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century onwards and pottery from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century.</i></p>					

## OASIS Form

The oasis form was updated to include details of this watching brief.

### OASIS ID: archaeo16-267272

#### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Michael's Church, Offham, Kent.
Short description of the project	The watching brief on the excavations for the soakaway and associated pipe trench did not uncover any archaeological features, however several finds were identified. Several human long bones and two skulls were seen, one of which was only partial, and another which could have been part of a full inhumation, however it was left in situ. Other finds were identified, including CBM from the 19th Century onwards, pottery from the 18th to 20th Century, a residual piece of Roman pottery, and a coffin grip used from the 1700's onwards.
Project dates	Start: 11-10-2016 End: 11-10-2016
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	SMC16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	0 None
Monument type	0 None
Significant Finds	0 None
Significant Finds	0 None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	KENT MAIDSTONE MAIDSTONE St Michael's Church, Offham, Kent
Postcode	ME19 6NE
Study area	1 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 6589 5812 51.2975 0.379722222222 51 17 51 N 000 22 47 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0.28m Max: 1m
Project creators	

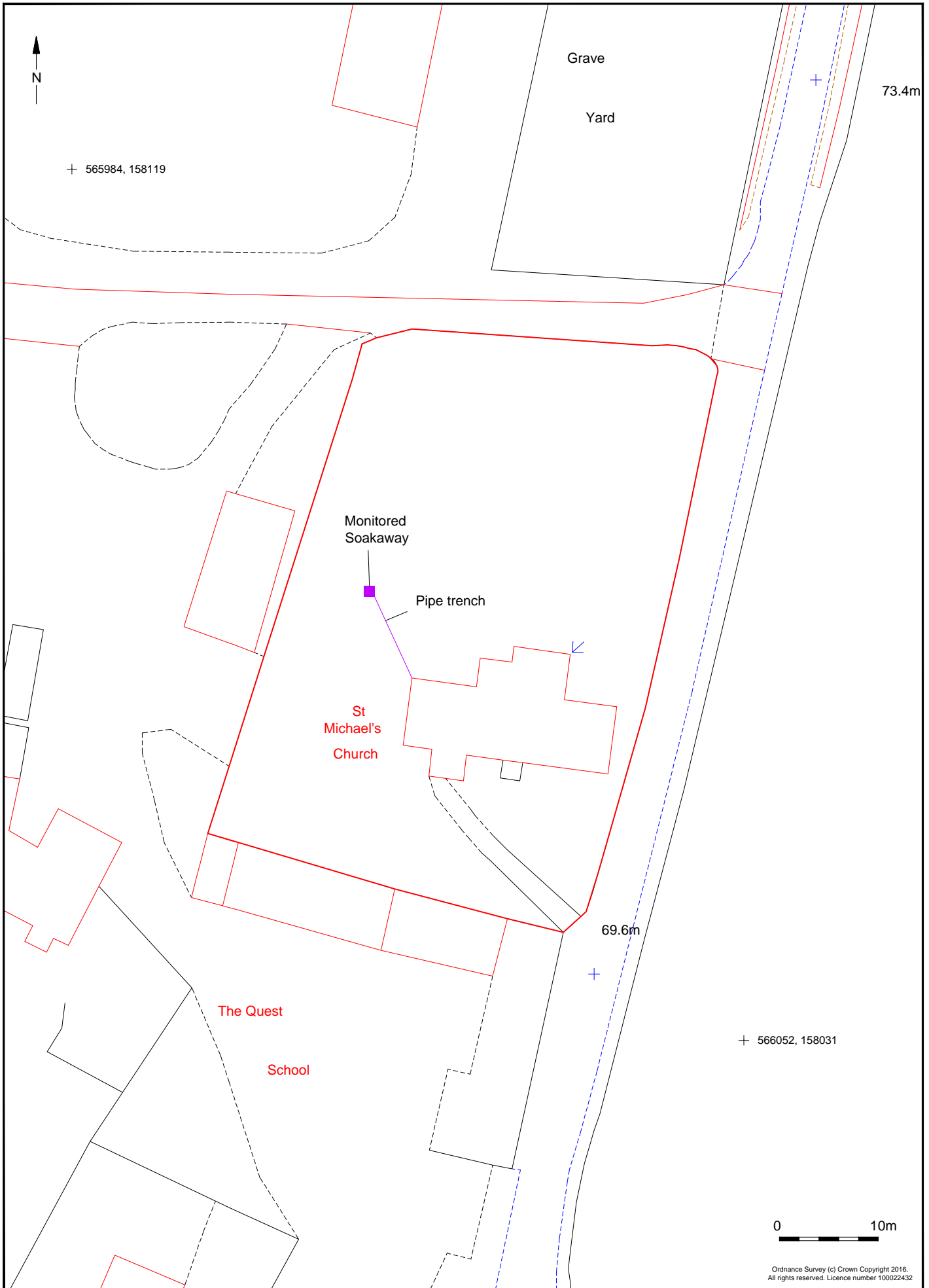
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South-East
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Paul Mason
Project supervisor	Jake Wilson
Type of sponsor/funding body	Thomas Ford and Partners
Name of sponsor/funding body	Thomas Ford and Partners
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	Local Museum
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Database","GIS","Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Diary","Map","Report"
Entered by	Jake Wilson (tcnjrjw@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	1 November 2016



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© Archaeology South-East		St Michaels Church, Offham		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 160767	June 2017	Site location		
Report Ref: 2017285	Drawn by: AR			





© Archaeology South-East		St. Michael's Church, Offham	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 160767	June 2017	Watching brief location	
Report Ref: 2017285	Drawn by: AR		



Backfilling.



In situ skull



Pipe trench



Soakaway.

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