

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
St. George's Church, Wrotham, Kent**

NGR: TQ 561193 159186

**ASE Project No: 4212
Site Code: SGC 10
Report No: 2010106**

OASIS ID: archaeol6-80256

by

**Kathryn Grant MSc AIFA
with contributions by
Elke Raemen and Sarah Porteus
Illustration by Justin Russell**

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**Archaeology South-East
Units 1 & 2
2 Chapel Place
Portslade
East Sussex
BN41 1DR**

Tel: 01273 426830

Fax: 01273 420866

Email: fau@ucl.ac.uk

website: www.archaeologyse.co.uk

Abstract

Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Thomas Ford and Partners, Chartered Architects Surveyors on behalf of Wrotham Parochial Church Council to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring during external drainage works at St. George's Church, Wrotham, Kent (NGR: TQ 561193 159186). The work took place between 28th June and 12th July 2010.

Natural geology comprising weathered chalk was encountered in Soakaway 3 at a depth of 1.3m below ground surface. The articulated skeletal remains of four individuals were encountered during the ground works at depths of between 0.7m and 1.3m. These were recorded and lifted for reburial within the cemetery. A few unstratified medieval and post-medieval ceramic building materials as well as frequent disarticulated human bone fragments were found within the cemetery soil across the site. All human bone fragments were recovered from the cemetery soil and re-interred in the cemetery.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, was commissioned by Thomas Ford and Partners, Chartered Architects Surveyors on behalf of Wrotham Parochial Church Council to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring at St. George's Church, Wrotham, Kent (NGR: TQ 561193 159186: Figure 1), hereafter referred to as 'the site'.
- 1.1.2 The project includes the installation of two soakaways and associated drainage (Fig 2). Planning permission is not required for these works.
- 1.1.3 St. George's Church is located on Borough Green Road in Wrotham, near Sevenoaks, Kent. The site is centred on NGR TQ 561193 159186. According to the British Geological Survey 1: 50 000 map of the area (Sheet 287, *Sevenoaks*), the underlying geology at the site is Lower Chalk.
- 1.1.4 The site was deemed to have archaeological potential due to its position within a graveyard. In brief, any intrusive ground work within the churchyard could potentially disturb human remains or other archaeological remains and deposits.

1.2 Planning Background

- 1.2.1 A Rochester Diocese Advisory Committee Certificate was issued for the scheme dated 8th April 2010 with the proviso that a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological watching brief be prepared in advance of the works taking place and that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during intrusive ground works associated with the proposed works.
- 1.2.2 In response to this request a *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by ASE (2010) outlining the requirements of the archaeological work. This document was submitted and duly approved by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor. The WSI outlined the specific aims and methodology to be used during the watching brief. All work was carried out in accordance with this document (unless otherwise specified below) and the relevant *Standards and Guidance* of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), as well as with reference to standard archaeological fieldwork, recording, and post-excavation practices in Kent.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

- 1.3.1 The objective of the archaeological watching brief was to contribute to knowledge of Wrotham and its church through the monitoring of intrusive ground work in order to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the ground works were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards. Particular attention was to be made to the extent, character, height below ground level, condition, date

and significance of the deposits.

1.4 Scope of the Report

- 1.4.1 This report presents the findings of the watching brief monitoring undertaken between 28th June and 12th July 2010 by Giles Dawkes, Kathryn Grant, Liane Peyre and Dan Swift. The project was managed by Neil Griffin and Dan Swift.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Church

- 2.1.1 As the church itself is the focal point of the site its history and development provides pertinent background to the sites activity over several centuries and has consequently been summarised here with all due acknowledgment to the relevant sources.
- 2.1.2 The church of St. George at Wrotham occupies an elevated position in the heart of the village. It is a Grade I listed building and has been described as '*one of the finest country churches in Kent*' (Pascoe 1926, 5). It is noted for the unusual passage through the 15th century tower (*ibid.*), and a fine set of surviving monuments and brasses (Wrotham and Borough Green Parish Councils 1967, 13).
- 2.1.3 Much of the visible masonry of the nave and chancel appears to date from the 13th/14th century, and the Victorian restoration of the church seems to have been broadly sympathetic to the medieval fabric (Pascoe 1926, 5). The tower was also partially restored during the 19th century and bears a commemorative plaque dated 1876.
- 2.1.4 The earliest known reference to a church at Wrotham comes from 964AD, when King Athelstan gave it to Christchurch at Canterbury. The church was a minster or '*primary mother-church*', and had a number of sub-ordinate or '*daughter churches*' (Sweetinburgh 2004, 40). After the Conquest it came into the possession of the Archbishops of Canterbury who held it through the Middle Ages, and built a palace nearby (Hasted 1798). The Domesday Book of 1086 mentions a church at Wrotham ('*Broteham*') (*ibid.*).
- 2.1.5 This early presumed wooden church was substantially rebuilt in the 13th and 14th century and a tower was added in the 15th century, along with a vestry on the north-west side of the chancel (Anon, 2009, 1). Church wardens' accounts survive from 1588, but give few clues as to building works on the church, although they do include some insights into life in and around the church. For instance between Easter 1668 and Easter 1669 the sum of 1s. and 8d. was paid for '*destroying 5 hedgehoggs*' (Pascoe 1926, 15).

2.2 Cartographic Evidence

- 2.2.1 Cartographic evidence for the development of the church is limited. The Centre for Kentish Studies at Maidstone holds two estate maps which show sketches of the church but neither show sufficient detail from which to draw any meaningful conclusions. The earliest dates from 1620, and is entitled '*A PLOT OF PARTE OF THE MANNOR OF WROTHAM IN KENT*' and states that it was surveyed by John Hine in that year (ref. CKS/U/681/P/31) (Figure 3). The other is '*A Survey and Map of lands lying in the parish of Wrotham in the County of Kent and belonging to William James*' dated 1759 (ref. CKS/U/681/P/8) (Figure 4). Both show the tower (with passage), porch, nave and chancel. Halsted's map of 1800 also shows a sketch of the church, but there is little detail (Figure 5).
- 2.2.2 The Tithe Map of 1840 gives a ground plan of the church and churchyard as

it is today (Parcel No. 1627) (Figure 6). The Apportionment lists the plot as 'Wrotham Church and Burial Ground'. By the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1870, there has been no obvious change (Figure 7), and although the 1896 and subsequent maps show the paths in the churchyard, this stasis continues through examined Ordnance Survey maps dated 1896 and 1908. By 1936 a war memorial has been added close to the porch and this is shown on maps of the 1963-64, 1974 and 1983, which show no obvious change to the church or the churchyard.

2.3 Historic Environment Record (Figure 1)

2.3.1 The Kent County Council Historic Environment Record lists a number of sites with a 1km radius of the church, mostly listed historic buildings in the core of the village, and the church itself. However, there are a small number of entries relating to other finds in the vicinity. These have been tabulated below and plotted on Figure 1:

2.3.2

ASE No.	HER No./Ref.	Details
1	TQ 65 NW 31/35	Anglo-Saxon inhumations with grave goods found in 1920s & 1950s, c.400m to north of church.
2	TQ 65 NW 36	Bronze axe of unusual type found in C19th century. Find spot unknown.
3	TQ 65 NW 68	Mesolithic tranchet axe found near 'The Old Church' (presumably the current site).
4	TQ 65 NW 69	Mesolithic tranchet axe. Now in Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.
5	TQ 65 NW 72	Mesolithic flake/blade now in Dartford Museum. Exact find spot unknown.
6	TQ 65 NW 73	Mesolithic tranchet axe now in Maidstone Museum. Exact find spot unknown.
7	TQ 65 NW 78	Late medieval bronze belt fitting and hook found in April 1973 at Yew Tree Cottage.

Table 1: Historic Environment Records

2.3.3 Hence there is the possibility that archaeological remains predating the use of the churchyard for burials may survive at the site, especially given the cluster of Mesolithic material recovered in the vicinity of the church.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** The complete adopted methodology may be found in the WSI (ASE 2010). This section is a brief précis of the detail within the WSI. The majority of excavations were carried out by contractors using hand-tools. A small mechanical excavator was brought in to complete excavations where the depth was no longer practical for hand-excavation. All ground reduction was carried out under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist. All revealed deposits were examined for archaeological features and artefacts. Where potential archaeological features, deposits or articulated human remains were revealed, work was stopped by the contractors and excavation was continued by the archaeologist. All spoil was scanned for the presence of any artefacts or disarticulated human remains.
- 3.2** Where disarticulated human remains were encountered these were collected and reburied in the cemetery. All *in-situ* human remains encountered during the works were carefully cleaned with small hand tools, recorded on standard ASE pro-forma record sheets, drawn as appropriate and photographed. After appropriate recording, human remains were removed and placed in the custody of the church for re-interment in the cemetery. In line with current guidance human remains were not chased beyond the limits of the main contractor's ground works (Church of England & English Heritage, 2005, 33 (Annex 5)). No detailed analysis of skeletal material was carried out.
- 3.3** The drainage trenches leading to each soakaway were planned and tied into the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 scale map of the area (Figure 2). A series of ground levels were taken using the bench mark (125.8m OD) located on the western wall of the church as a back sight. Heights were taken across the course of the trench to show the natural slope of the churchyard. As simple stratigraphic sequences were revealed during the watching brief monitoring, only sample sections of the soakaway trenches were drawn and are included in the archive. These illustrations have been kept as part of the archive for this project. For the purpose of context recording and differentiation, contexts revealed during the watching brief were numbered sequentially from 001. A photographic record was maintained throughout the watching brief in order to demonstrate progress, methodology and findings. Since the main deposits uncovered at the site comprised variations in cemetery soil, no environmental samples were collected.
- 3.4** The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be offered to a suitable local museum in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 2).

Number of Contexts	7
No. of files/paper record	1 file
Plan and sections sheets	1 plan and measured drawings
Bulk Samples	None
Photographs	c.40
Bulk finds	½ Box

Table 2: Quantification of the site archive

4.0 RESULTS (Figure 2)

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 The ground works comprised the excavation of three soakaways and associated drainage trenches. Seven contexts were taken during the archaeological monitoring at the site. The contexts have been tabulated below (Table 3) and details of each soakaway have been provided from section 4.2 onwards.

4.1.2 Four articulated human skeletons were encountered during the excavations and these have been recorded and lifted for reburial. Due to the mixed nature of the cemetery soil and the limited exposure of each burial, grave cuts were not visible. Fragments of coffin furniture such as ferrous nails and handles were revealed in close proximity to the skeletons and also within the wider cemetery soil context. These were also re-interred with the relevant articulated and disarticulated remains as appropriate.

4.1.3 A simple stratigraphic sequence was revealed during the ground works. Cemetery soil [001] comprising mid to dark brown firm silty clay with frequent sub-angular flint, peg tile, occasional chalk flecks and frequent disarticulated bone fragments, was encountered in all of the excavated areas across the cemetery. Natural weathered chalk [007] was only observed in Soakaway 3 at a depth of 1.3m below the ground surface.

4.1.4

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Deposit Thickness
001	Deposit	Cemetery Soil	1.3m (min.)
002	Skeleton	Articulated Skeleton	-
003	Deposit	Made Ground	300mm
004	Skeleton	Articulated Skeleton	-
005	Skeleton	Articulated Skeleton	-
006	Skeleton	Articulated Skeleton	-
007	Deposit	Weathered Chalk	-

Table 3: List of recorded contexts

4.2 Soakaway 1 (Figure 2)

4.2.1 Soakaway 1 was located south of the church and measured 2m north-south and 1m east-west with a maximum depth of 1.5m. The only deposit revealed during these excavations was cemetery soil [001].

4.2.2 The articulated skeletal remains of an adult individual [002] was partially revealed during the excavation of Soakaway 1. This burial was encountered at a depth of 1.3m below the ground surface.

4.2 Soakaway 2 (Figure 2)

4.2.1 Soakaway 2 was located east of the church and measured 2m east-west and 1m north-south with a maximum depth of 1.2m.

4.2.2 The articulated skeletal remains of an adult individual [002] was partially

revealed during the excavation of Soakaway 2. This burial was encountered at a depth of 1.15m below the ground surface.

4.3 Soakaway 3 (Figure 2)

4.3.1 Soakaway 3 was located north of the church and measured 2m north-south and 1m east-west with a maximum depth of 2.5m.

4.3.2 A made ground deposit [003] with a thickness of 300mm was encountered directly beneath the turf in the area of Soakaway 3. This deposit comprised mid greyish brown loose, rubbly-silt with frequent sub-rounded pebbles, occasional flint nodules, occasional tile, ceramics, clay tobacco pipe stems and frequent disarticulated human bone fragments. It is likely that this deposit has derived from a construction/redevelopment phase of work associated with the church building.

4.3.3 The articulated skeletal remains of two adult individuals, [004] and [005], were partially revealed during the excavation of this soakaway. The skeletons were encountered at a depth of 700mm and 950mm below ground level respectively.

4.3.4 Natural weathered chalk geology was encountered 1.3m below the ground surface.

4.4 Drainage Runs

4.4.1 Several trenches were excavated as drainage runs from the church to the 3 soakaways. The trenches were c.300mm wide with varying depths depending of the natural fall of the ground level. Only context [001] was revealed within these trenches. Although these excavations did not impact on any articulated skeletal remains, more disarticulated bone fragments were recovered for reburial.

5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The archaeological work produced a small assemblage of finds. An overview can be found in Table 4.

5.1.2 The finds in this report were all from cemetery soil. To differentiate between areas this context was prefixed by the soakaway number from which the finds were from.

5.1.3

Context	Pottery	Wt(g)	CBM	Wt (g)	CTP	Wt (g)
003	1	10	13	440	1	6
1/001		7	334			
2/001		6	144			
3/001			3	80		
Total	1	23	494	520	1	6

Table 4: Quantification of the finds

5.2 The Pottery by Elke Raemen

5.2.1 Two fragments of creamware were recovered from [003]. Sherds date to c. 1760 to 1830.

5.3 The Ceramic Building Material by Sarah Porteus

5.3.1 A total of 29 fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) with a combined weight of 990g were recovered from four contexts. The earliest material identified was medieval peg tile of probable 12th to 13th century date with splash glaze coating and reduced core and sparse coarse quartz inclusions which was identified in context [2/001] (2/54g) and [1/001] (1/26g). Two possible fragments of medieval curved and flanged tiles were recovered from context [003] (2/46g). These fragments are small and the form identification is not securely identified. The remaining material is peg tile of broad post-medieval date recovered from contexts [003] (11/388g), [2/001] (4/90g), [1/001] (6/306g), [3/001] (3/80g). Two post-medieval peg tile fabrics were identified, T1, an orange fabric with fine to coarse white calcareous inclusions and sparse medium sized rose quartz and burnt organics; and T2, a fine orange fabric with moderate fine sand inclusions and very sparse rose quartz and moderate very fine calcareous inclusions.

5.4 Clay Tobacco Pipe by Elke Raemen

5.4.1 A single, plain stem fragment was recovered from [003]. The piece dates to the mid 17th- to early 18th-century.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1** The small finds assemblage is quite typical for a church site. Evidence of past reconstruction/redevelopment was present in the form of discarded ceramic building materials. Such building materials, specifically peg tiles, are likely to be associated with the upkeep of the church.
- 6.2** Four articulated human burials were encountered during the ground works at St. George's Church. None of the graves were marked by above ground memorials. In all cases, the skeletons were only partially revealed within the excavated areas. The revealed remains were carefully cleaned and recorded before being lifted and placed in the custody of the church for re-interment in the cemetery. All disarticulated remains were also bagged for reburial in the cemetery. The results of the excavations demonstrate that burial depth is considerably higher to the north of the church with as little coverage as 700mm (300mm of which comprised redeposited building materials/made ground). Conversely, burials to the south and east of the church were deeper at 1.3m and 1.15m respectively. The shallow depth in the north may be the result of landscaping of the downward slope, perhaps associated with a stage of development of the church building. It is possible that context [003] was deposited within this area with the intention of raising the level.
- 6.3** Natural geology (Lower Chalk) was only encountered to the north of the church in Soakaway 3 at a depth of 1.3m below ground level. It is not unusual for only small areas of undisturbed natural geology to survive at these depths on cemetery sites.
- 6.4** No archaeological remains predating the church were encountered during the monitored ground works.
- 6.5** The watching brief can be seen to have fulfilled its aims in that any impacted archaeological remains encountered during the excavations were recorded and where necessary, relocated, in the case of graves.

REFERENCES

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Web Sources

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX I - Listed Building Details (accessed from Web Source 1)**Building Details:**

Building Name: CHURCH
OF ST GEORGE
Parish: WROTHAM
District: TONBRIDGE
AND MALLING
County: KENT
Postcode: TN15 7AE

Details:

LBS Number: 427588
Grade: I
Date Listed: 25/08/1959
Date Delisted:
NGR: TQ6118359189

Listing Text:

TQ6059-6159 WROTHAM C.P. THE SQUARE
7/36 (east side)
25.8.59
Church of St George
GV
I

Church. Early C14 with C15 west tower; chancel restored 1860-61 by Newman and Billing, tower restored by R Wheeler, 1876. Random rubble, plain tiled roofs. Angle buttresses to tower, which has crenellated parapet and north-east turret. Passage through it north-south on ground-floor with 3-bay rib-vault, originally to allow processions to circle the church without descending into the road to the west of the church ('The Square'). Nave with gabled aisles and chancel with east window inserted 1958, reputedly from St Alban, Wood Street, City of London, Gothic survival of 1633-34. All other windows renewed. Low south porch with arched entrance and vaulted interior. Parvis chamber above. Interior. North aisle of 4 bays, south aisle of 3 bays, these respaced; both with circular arcade piers and double chamfered arches. Similar chancel arch. 2 bay chancel. Font. C13, stone, octagonal, 2 shallow sunk arches on each face. Pulpit. 1861. Stone, with marble shafts, supported on group of angels. Rood screen. C15. Wood with triple square-headed lights. Piscina. Cinquefoiled ogee-arch and hood-mould on ball flowers. Identical piscina in south aisle. Reredos in South

Aisle, Ninian Campen,
1907. Benefactions boards under tower, C18 with fern-
leaf surround. Wall-painting
in chancel. Monuments. Brasses. Thomas Nysell, d.1498;
John Burgoyn, c.1500;
Thomas Pekham, d.1512; Reynold Pekham, d.1525;
Hames Pekham, d.1532; William Clarke,
d.1611; Elizabeth Crispe, d.1615. Wall Monuments.
Robert Rychens, d.1588. Black
marble slab showing kneeling family, set in alabaster
framework. Nicholas Miller,
erected 1661. Black tablet with bust in open pediment
over. Lucretia Betenson
d.c.1760. Bust in relief on draped roundel in concave
surround. Perhaps by
Nicholas Read, (R. Gunnis, Dictionary of British Sculptors,
1660-1851).

Listing NGR: TQ6118359189

APPENDIX II - SMR Summary Form

Site Code	SGC 10						
Identification Name and Address	St. George's Church, Wrotham						
County, District &/or Borough	Kent						
OS Grid Refs.	NGR TQ 561193 159186						
Geology	Weathered chalk						
Arch. South-East Project Number	4212						
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other	
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other Churchyard			
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB.	Other			
Sponsor/Client	Thomas Ford and Partners on behalf of PCC						
Project Manager	Neil Griffin						
Project Supervisor	Kathryn Grant						
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.		BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED Unstrat. CBM	PM Unstrat. CBM, CTP & Pottery sherds		Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Thomas Ford and Partners, Chartered Architects Surveyors on behalf of Wrotham Parochial Church Council to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring at St. George's Church, Wrotham, Kent (NGR: TQ 561193 159186) during external drainage works. This work took place between 28th June and 12th July 2010. Natural geology comprising weathered chalk was encountered in Soakaway 3 at a depth of 1.3m below ground surface. The articulated skeletal remains of four individuals were encountered during the ground works at depths of between 0.7m and 1.3m. These were recorded and lifted for reburial within the cemetery. A few unstratified medieval and post-medieval ceramic building materials as well as frequent disarticulated human bone fragments were found within the cemetery soil across the site. All human bone fragments were recovered from the cemetery soil for re-interment by the church.</i></p>							

APPENDIX III - OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeo16-80256

Project details

Project name	St. George's Church, Wrotham
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Thomas Ford and Partners, Chartered Architects Surveyors on behalf of Wrotham Parochial Church Council to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring at St. George's Church, Wrotham, Kent (NGR: TQ 561193 159186) during external drainage works. This work took place between 28th June and 12th July 2010. Natural geology comprising weathered chalk was encountered in Soakaway 3 at a depth of 1.3m below ground surface. The articulated skeletal remains of four individuals were encountered during the ground works at depths of between 0.7m and 1.3m. These were recorded and lifted for reburial within the cemetery. A few unstratified medieval and post-medieval ceramic building materials as well as frequent disarticulated human bone fragments were found within the cemetery soil across the site. All human bone fragments were recovered from the cemetery soil for re-interment by the church.
Project dates	Start: 28-06-2010 End: 12-07-2010
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	SGC 10 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Significant Finds	CBM Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM, POT AND CTP Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'

Project location

Country	England
Site location	KENT TONBRIDGE AND MALLING WROTHAM St. George's Church, Wrotham, Kent
Postcode	TN15 7AE
Site coordinates	TQ 561193 159186 50.9209974444 0.221444369257 50 55 15 N 000 13 17 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Kathryn Grant
Type of sponsor/funding body	Diocese

Entered by	Kathryn Grant (Kathryn.Grant@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	27 July 2010