

**CHURCH OF ST LAWRENCE  
WILLINGTON  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ATTENDANCE,  
RECORDING AND REPORTING**

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Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
David Ingham	Robert Wardill	Drew Shottliff

Produced for:  
Bruce Deacon Architect Ltd  
8 East End Lane  
Wilden  
Bedford  
MK44 2QN



## Introduction

A condition placed on planning consent for improvement works at the Church of St Lawrence, Willington, Bedfordshire (NGR: TL 1066 4986) required the implementation of a programme of archaeological monitoring, the requirements for which were set out by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser (DAA 2008, *Brief for Archaeological Attendance, Recording and Reporting at the Church of St Lawrence, Willington, Beds*). Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Bruce Deacon Architect Ltd, on behalf of Willington Parochial Church Council, to carry out the work.

The church, a Grade II listed building, stands at the western edge of the village, five miles east of Bedford (Fig. 1) on the edge of the River Great Ouse gravel terrace. Although rebuilt in the 16th century, the existing church may retain fabric from an earlier building. The church is close to the site of the demolished 16th-century Gostwick manor house.

This report was prepared by David Ingham (Project Officer), with contributions from Joan Lighting (CAD Technician) and Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). It was edited by Robert Wardill (Project Manager). All Albion Archaeology projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

## Description of Ground-works

The ground-works comprised the excavation of service trenches (0.3m wide x 0.75m deep) to the north and west of the church (Fig. 1), which were linked by a soak-away trench (1m wide, 6m long and 0.85m deep in the northern half, decreasing to 0.6m at the southern end). The trenches were excavated using a mechanical digger under close archaeological supervision. In addition, a hole measuring 0.5m long, 0.3m wide and 0.6m deep was excavated inside the blocked-up doorway of the tower, to connect with the service trench outside.

## Archaeological Methodology

All ground-works associated with the improvement works were monitored and recorded between 8th and 16th April 2008. Methods employed during the project complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (1999), English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991), and Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* (2001).

A plan and digital photographic record was made of all significant features. All deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence, and all artefacts were assigned to their proper context number. Following consultation with the DAA, and in line with the guidelines *Taking Care of Human Remains*, issued by the Chancellor of the Diocese of St Albans in 2000, all human bone was left securely on site for immediate reburial.

## Results

Excavation in the base of the tower revealed an earlier stone floor surface, 0.3m below the current one. The floor is likely to have been raised at the same time as the tower's west door was blocked up, so that it was on the same level as that of the nave.

Excavation of the service trenches revealed a layer of topsoil (1) that was 0.3m thick, overlying at least 0.5m of subsoil / made ground. A modern rubble deposit (7) was recorded to the north of the church (Fig. 2), associated with a masonry feature (possibly a soak-away) directly north of the trench. The subsoil was recorded as deposit (2) to the west of this and as (3) to the east. The two were essentially the same, although (3)



contained a significantly higher quantity of ceramic building material and mortar. An earlier subsoil (4) was recorded in the deepest part of the soak-away trench.

Articulated human remains (6) were revealed at the base of the soak-away trench within grave [5] (Fig. 3), cutting subsoil (4) and sealed by subsoil (2). At least three individuals appeared to be present. Probable articulated remains were also revealed in the service trench to the east, but only as far as deposit (7). Disarticulated human (and occasionally animal) bone was recovered from the subsoil throughout.

### Artefacts

Seventeen Saxon to late medieval pottery sherds, weighing 241 g, were recovered from subsoil layers (2) and (3). They are fairly small (average weight of 14g) but not particularly abraded. Nine fabric types were identified (Table 1) using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology on behalf of Bedfordshire County Council.

Date	Fabric type	Common name	Sherd No.	Context:Sherd No.
<i>Saxon</i>	Type A19	Quartz and organic	1	(3):1
<i>Saxo-Norman</i>	Type B01	St Neots-type ware	6	(2):5; (3):1
	Type B01A	St Neots-type (orange)	1	(3):1
	Type B01B	St Neots-type (fine)	1	(3):1
<i>Medieval</i>	Type B07	Shell	2	(2):1, (3):1
	Type C01	Sand	2	(2):1, (3):1
	Type C53	Sand (pasty)	1	(3):1
	Type C60	Hertfordshire-type grey ware	2	(3):2
<i>Late medieval</i>	Type E01	Reduced sand	1	(3):1

**Table 1:** Pottery type series

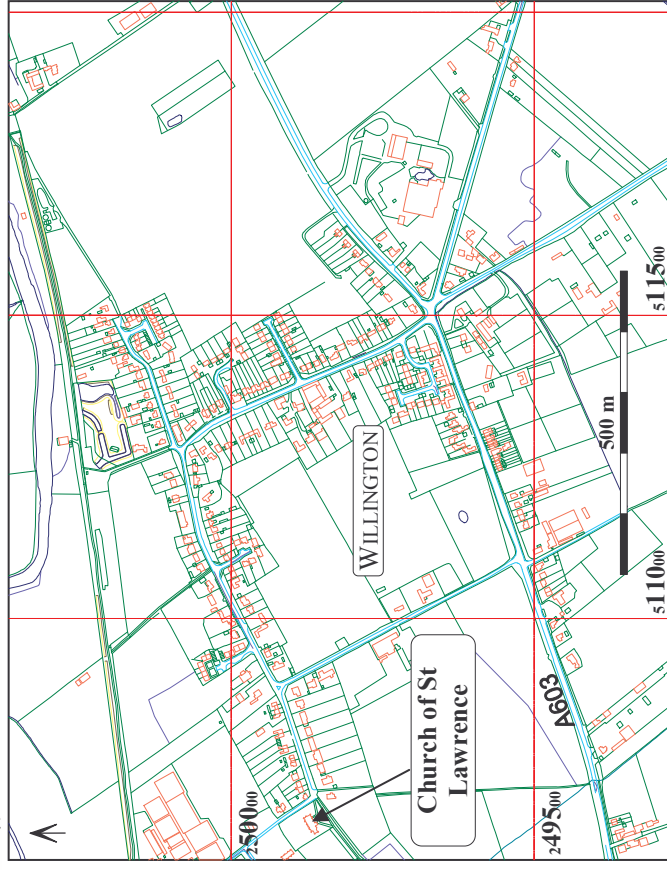
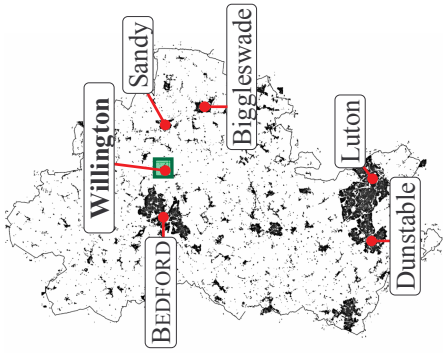
The earliest pottery is a handmade organic- and sand-tempered early to middle Saxon body sherd (*c.* AD400–850). Saxo-Norman pottery is represented by eight undiagnostic wheel-thrown shell-tempered sherds in the St Neots-type tradition (*c.* 850–1150). Medieval pottery comprises five sand- and two shell-tempered coarse ware sherds datable to the 12th–13th centuries. One sand-tempered body sherd of 14th–15th century reduced ware was also identified. Diagnostic vessel forms are flat and square rim jars; one body sherd has an applied thumbed decorative strip. Several sherds are sooted, indicating use.

A representative sample of ceramic building material collected from subsoil (3), weighing 1,057g, includes two worn, glazed rectilinear floor tile fragments and four pieces of flat roof tile. All are likely to be of post-medieval or later date.

### Conclusion

The ground-works revealed unmarked cemetery remains by the north-west corner of the church (Fig. 2). Their east–west alignment is indicative of Christian burials. They were buried at a sufficient depth to be preserved *in situ* beneath the services.

No direct evidence was found of a predecessor to the current church. However, the close proximity of the cemetery remains to the western end of the church suggests that they are not contemporary, and the pottery recovered from the subsoil, which shows little evidence of re-depositional abrasion, suggests activity on the site from the Saxon period onwards.



**Figure 1: Site location plan**

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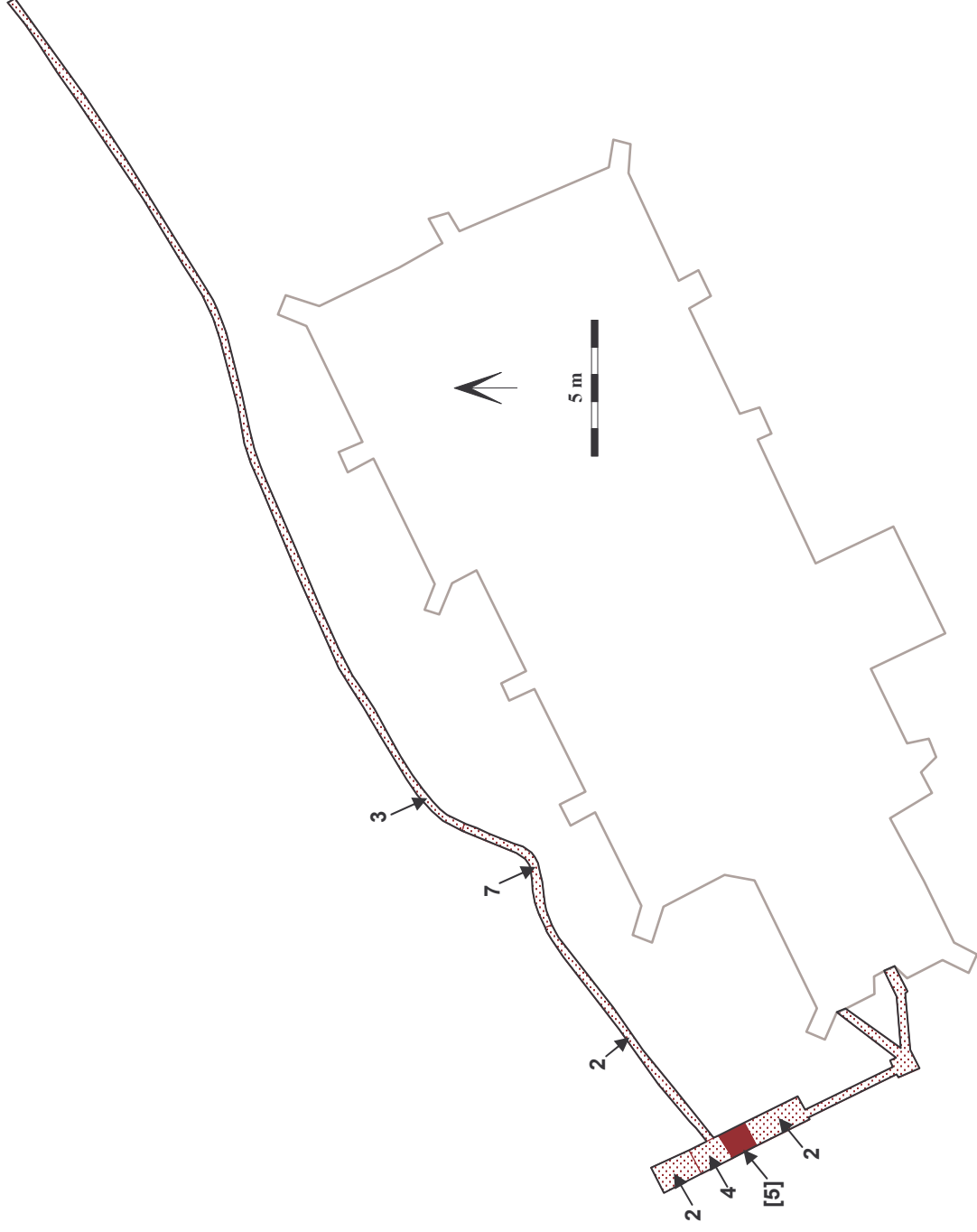


Figure 2: All features



*Excavation in progress north of the church*



*Grave [5]; north is to the bottom of the photograph. Scale 0.4m. Two skulls are visible below the scale; a pelvis and right leg are visible above*

**Figure 2:** Selected photographs