



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief at
The Church of St Mary, Titchmarsh,
Northamptonshire
January - February 2011



Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Report 11/105

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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
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Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An archaeological watching brief during renovation works at The Church of St Mary, Titchmarsh, Northamptonshire	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during renovation works at The Church of St Mary, Titchmarsh, Northamptonshire. The work comprised the removal of the existing pews and wooden sections of flooring from the nave, south aisle and north aisle. Undated deposits were revealed containing a possible fragment of grave slab. A George V copper penny was found sealed beneath the central pews, possibly indicating the date of installation.	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Site status	Parish Church, Grade 1 Listed	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Ecclesiastical	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period		
Significant finds		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	The Church of St Mary, Titchmarsh, Northamptonshire	
Study area (sq metres)	c 225 sq m	
OS Easting & Northing	TL 0200 7986	
Height OD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Diocesan Archaeological Advisor	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	David J Leigh	
Project Manager	Iain Soden	
Sponsor or funding body	Titchmarsh PCC	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	January 2011	
End date	February 2011	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Watching brief forms (4) Copper penny (1) Limestone fragment (1) Colour slides (8) black and white contact prints (8) Digital photographs (31)
Digital		Report text and figures
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published, forthcoming, unpublished		
Title	An archaeological watching brief during renovation works at The Church of St Mary, Titchmarsh, Northamptonshire	
Author	David J Leigh	
Serial title and volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology report, 11/105	
Date	June 2011	

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF DURING RENOVATION WORKS

AT THE CHURCH OF ST MARY, TITCHMARSH, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2011

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during renovation works at The Church of St Mary, Titchmarsh, Northamptonshire. The work comprised the removal of the existing pews and wooden sections of flooring from the nave, south aisle and north aisle. Undated deposits were revealed containing a possible fragment of grave slab. A George V copper penny was found sealed beneath the central pews, possibly indicating the date of installation.

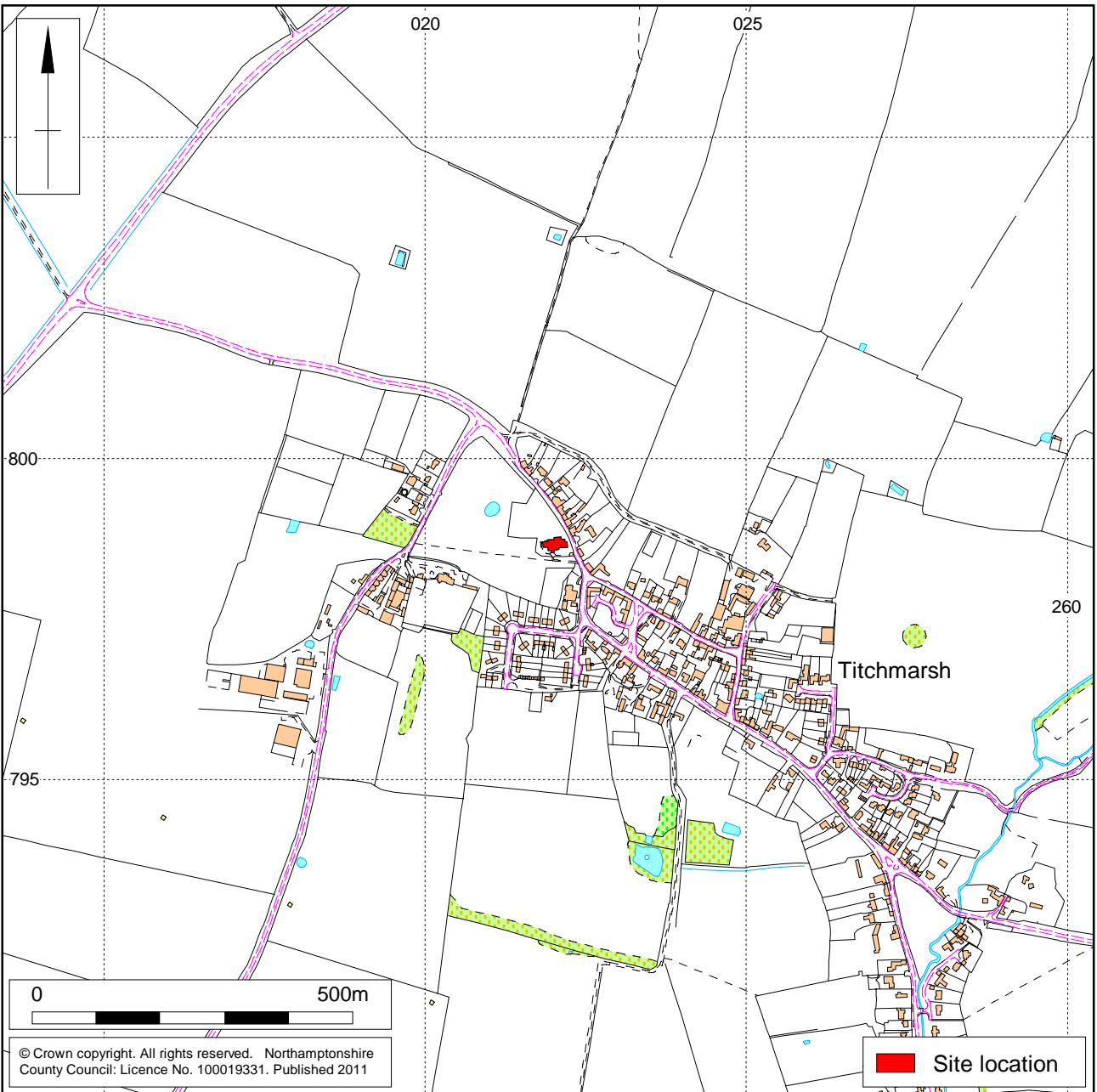
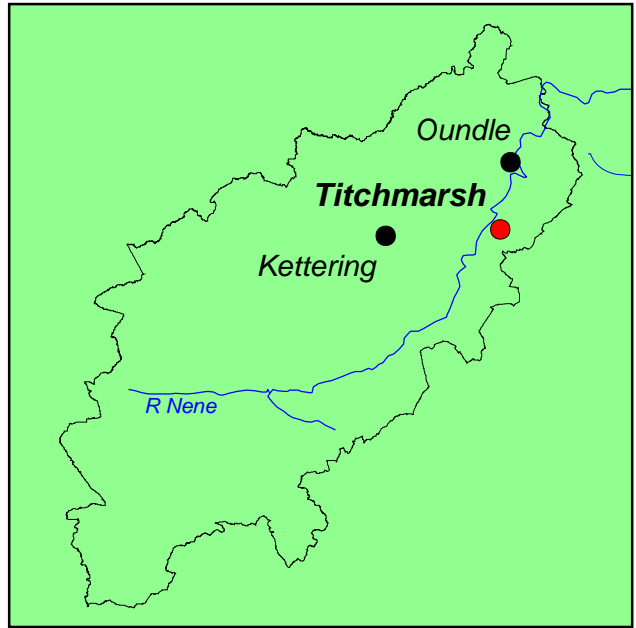
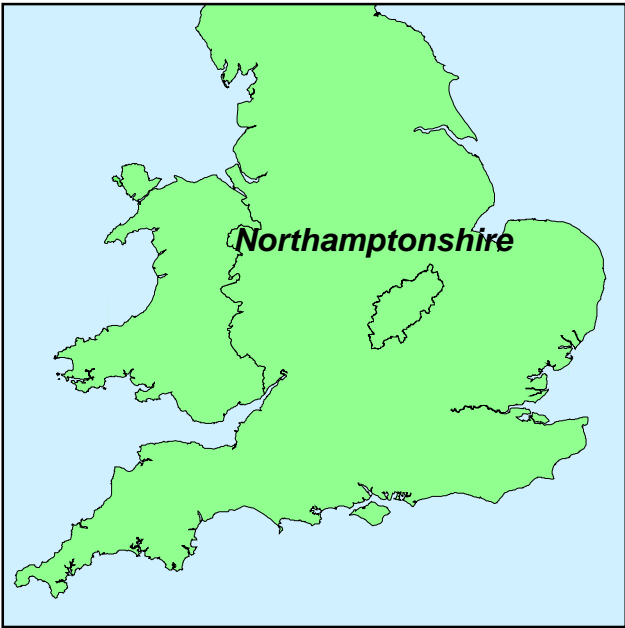
1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during January and February 2011 during renovation works at The Church of St Mary, Titchmarsh, Northamptonshire (NGR: TL 0200 7986; Figs 1 and 3). The work was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Titchmarsh PCC and adhered to the requirements issued by the Peterborough Diocesan Archaeological Advisor and following the procedural document MOrPHE issued by English Heritage (EH 2006) and the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

2 BACKGROUND

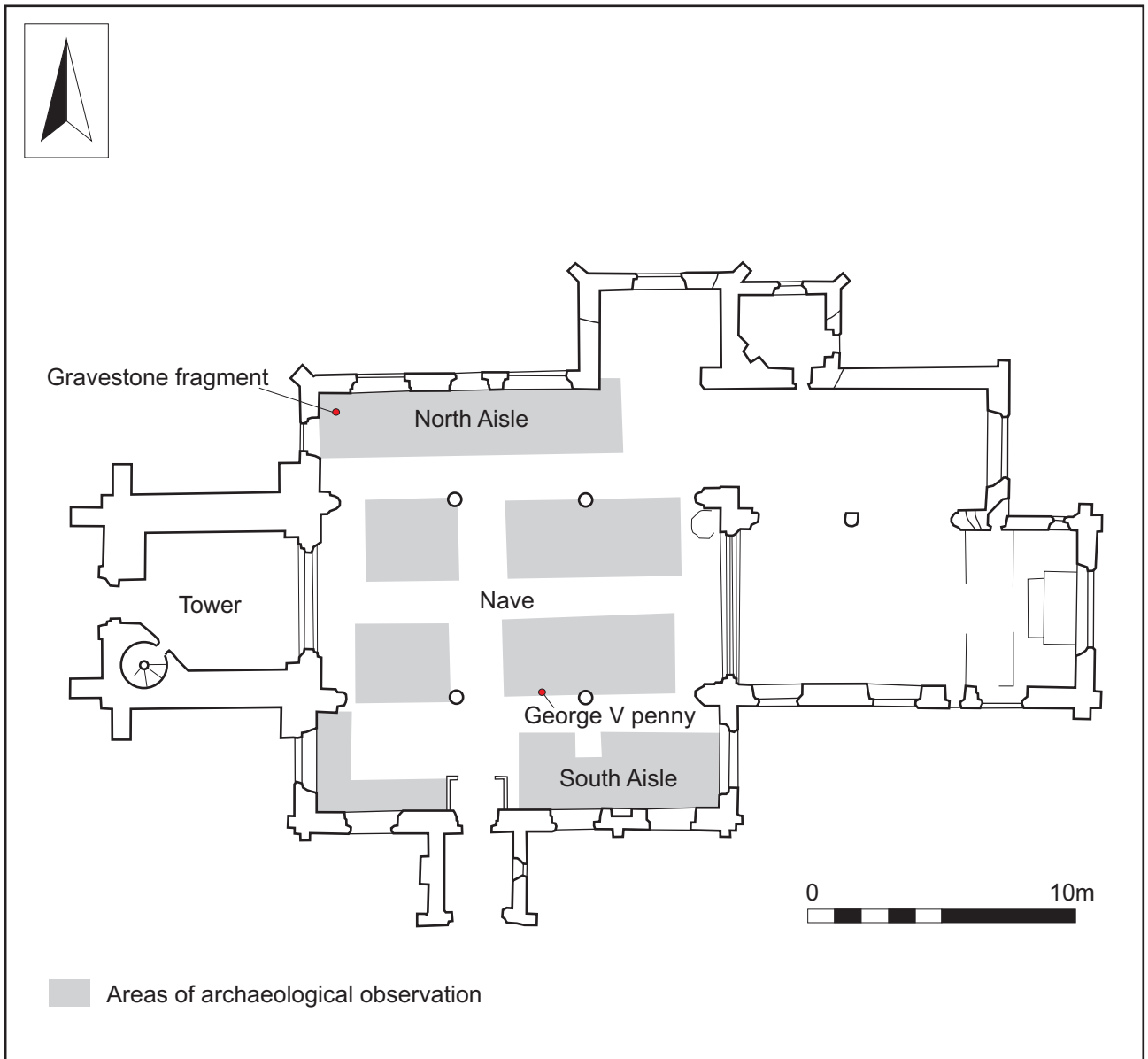
2.1 Location and topography

The Church of St Mary is situated on level ground within the village of Titchmarsh approximately 15km east of Kettering and 8km south of Oundle. The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising Oolitic Limestone (BGS 2009).



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:250 (A4)

Areas of archaeological observation Fig 2



The Church of St Mary, Titchmarsh Fig 3

2.2 Historical background

The Church of St Mary lies on level ground within the village of Titchmarsh, and in an area of archaeological interest. Titchmarsh is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086AD as *Ticemerse*.

Approximately 400m to the north of the church are the earthwork remains of Titchmarsh Castle (National Monuments Record No: 13628) comprising a substantial ditch and evidence of stone construction. The site is recorded in 1304 when a license to crenelate was granted to Sir John Lovell.

The Church of St Mary dates mainly from the 13th century, although an earlier origin is indicated in a Norman door incorporated into the present building. Later additions were made to the church during the 15th century with subsequent restoration during the mid 19th century.

No previous archaeological work is recorded as having been carried out within the church.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the watching brief were to:

- ◆ Observe the groundworks connected with the renovation works and to record all archaeological deposits uncovered
- ◆ Determine the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The fieldwork comprised visits to the site during the removal of pews (Figs 2 and 4) and sections of wooden flooring followed by the reduction of those areas prior to the laying of new stone slab flooring. The groundworks were carried out using hand-tools.

A photographic record in both black and white negative and colour slide was kept, with supplementary photographs in digital format. The written record used Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma sheets. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the standards and guidelines for an archaeological watching brief (IfA 2008).



The pews in the south aisle prior to removal Fig 4

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

4.1 The removal of the pews and flooring

Following removal of the pews (Fig 5) and the wooden flooring platform upon which they rested, a deposit comprising pale grey-brown silty loam was revealed, containing numerous pieces of limestone flagstones similar to those covering the remainder of the floor surface, with occasional fragments of modern ceramic building material. This extended the full depth of the renovation groundworks. It was shovel scraped approximately 500mm down to the required formation level to allow the bedding of the replacement floor slabs. A fragment of worked limestone was recovered from this material in the north aisle.

The substructure of the pews was recorded and comprised two parallel single rows of modern engineering bricks (Fig 6) upon which the central base of the pews lay, the outer edge of the pew placed upon the existing flag floor. Beneath the pew support in the nave a 1919 King George V copper penny was recovered and retained for inclusion in the project archive.



The removal of the pews Fig 5

4.2 The timber wall cladding

As part of the original construction of the pews in both the north and south aisles timber cladding had been affixed, extending approximately 1.0m up the walls (Fig 7). Following examination of the newly exposed masonry no architecturally significant features were revealed.



View of the brick pew supports in the north aisle Fig 6



The west wall of the south aisle after removal of the timber cladding Fig 7

5 THE FRAGMENT OF WORKED LIMESTONE by David J Leigh

A single fragment of worked fossiliferous Oolitic limestone was collected during the course of the renovation work (Fig 8). This measures approximately 400mm wide x 3690mm long with a maximum thickness of 120mm. The one undamaged side of the fragment has been worked flat, whilst the back is slightly concave. A single ridge in relief, 40mm wide, runs down the centre of the fragment.

Although it cannot be stated with certainty, the form of the limestone fragment is suggestive of a uniface medieval grave slab of the type commonly set on the tops of tombs. The raised relief which runs down the centre of the slab may be the vestigial remains of the cross originally running down the length of the slab to a terminal crosshead. Further elements of this slab may be incorporated in the west wall of the south aisle.



The limestone fragment (500mm scale) Fig 8

6 THE SITE ARCHIVE

Until such time as a suitable depository has been identified in Northamptonshire the project archive will be held at Northamptonshire Archaeology.

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	4
Limestone fragment	1
King George V penny	1
Colour slides	8
Black and white contacts and negatives	8
Digital photographs	31

7 CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigation carried out during the removal of the pews and the associated timber flooring revealed no archaeological deposits. Fragments of limestone flags found within the material beneath the pews suggest that the flagfloor once extended across the church but was broken up by the installation of the pews. This may have taken place around 1919.

A single fragment of possible grave slab was identified from the mixed soil deposit beneath the pews. No significant archaeological deposits were present within the area of archaeological investigation. The watching brief was carried out in favourable conditions and the results are considered to be reliable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS 2009 <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html> British Geological Survey website

IfA 2008 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

EH 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*, English Heritage Procedural Document



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