

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
OF REFURBISHMENT AT  
BURLEY ON THE HILL CHURCH,  
BURLEY,  
RUTLAND  
(BUHC07)**

**Work Undertaken For  
The Churches Conservation Trust**

October 2007

Report Compiled by  
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT SERVICES**



APS Report No. **126/07**



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## 1. SUMMARY

*A watching brief was undertaken during refurbishment at the Church of the Holy Cross, Burley on the Hill, Rutland. The watching brief monitored the removal of decayed timbers from the church floor, which supported pews and excavation of new external postholes.*

*The church was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD. Removal of the timber supports exposed part of the internal church foundations. In addition, new postholes were excavated adjacent to the external church wall and exposed below ground deposits.*

*This watching brief revealed a sequence of medieval, eighteenth century and modern deposits. Medieval remains were limited to the external stone foundations. However an early eighteenth century gravestone was revealed partially sealed below the modern floor surface. All of the other exposed foundation and floor deposits relate to renovation work associated with the 1870s.*

*Fragments of early modern tile and brick were recovered during the investigation.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as “a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits maybe disturbed or destroyed.” (IFA 1999).

### 2.2 Project Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Churches Conservation Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief during refurbishment at The Church of the Holy Cross, Burley on the Hill, Rutland. Refurbishment was necessary, as rot and deathwatch beetle had damaged much of the wooden platforms, which support the current pews.

The watching brief was carried out between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007.

### 2.3 Topography and Geology

Burley is situated 3.5km northeast of Oakham and 17.7km west of Stamford in the county of Rutland (Fig. 1). The estate of Burley on the Hill is situated c. 200m northeast of the village on the top of a prominent Hill. The Church of the Holy Cross lies within the grounds of Burley on the hill estate, just west of the main house at approximately 154m OD.

Local soils are of the Banbury Association, typically composed of ferritic brown earth overlying upper Lincolnshire limestone, which formed in the Jurassic period (BGS 1978).

### 2.4 Archaeological Setting

Burley derives from the Old English *Burg* and *Leah* meaning a fortified place in a woodland clearing (Ekwall 1989, 75). This suggests a Saxon origin for the settlement. The addition of *on the hill* appears to be fairly recent.

The manor of Burley is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, at which time it was under the joint ownership of Ulf and Geoffrey, Gilbert de Ghent's man. At this time the settlement possessed meadow and sizeable woodland, however no church was recorded (Williams & Martin 1992, 923).

Burley gained its parish church in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which was subsequently remodelled throughout the medieval period. Burley estate passed into the possession of the Duke of Buckingham in the early 1600s. However during the Civil War, the estate was occupied by Parliamentary forces, which destroyed many of the buildings in 1644. The late medieval stable block survived the fire and was retained largely unchanged into the twentieth century (Wood, nd,19).

The Buckingham family later sold Burley to Daniel Finch, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Nottingham and 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Winchilsea, who commissioned the development of the current house and grounds, undertaken between 1674 and 1704 (Wood, nd. 21). Most of the estate buildings have now been converted into private, residential dwellings.

Burley church retains some of its medieval architecture, including the tower and a 15<sup>th</sup> century font. However, the church was substantially restored in 1870 at the expense of the then owner Mr G. H. Finch in memory of his wife, Eglantine (Wood, nd, 31).

### 3. AIMS

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to ensure that any archaeological features exposed during the groundworks should be recorded and, if present, to determine their date, function and origin.

### 4. METHODS

Wooden pew supports were removed by hand and the revealed hardcore platforms cleaned (Plate 3). In addition, several new postholes were excavated outside the church wall, which were also monitored and recorded (Plate 4).

During internal groundworks, an early 18<sup>th</sup> century gravestone was exposed below the current floor level. This stone will remain insitu, and a gravestone rubbing was made in addition to standard APS recording.

A record was made by positioning strips of fax paper over the gravestone's inscription and applying direct pressure to the paper's surface, which left behind a negative impression. The APS illustrator reproduced this impression at a scale of 1:1.

Each exposed deposit was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts and their descriptions appears as Appendix 1. A photographic record was compiled and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Recording was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services practice.

Following excavation, finds were examined and a period date assigned where possible (Appendix 2). The records were also checked and a stratigraphic matrix produced. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them and supplemented by artefact dating.

### 5. RESULTS

Following post-excavation analysis three phases were identified;

Phase 1	Medieval
Phase 2	18 <sup>th</sup> century
Phase 3	Modern (19 <sup>th</sup> & 20 <sup>th</sup> C AD)

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

## 5.1 Medieval deposits

Part of the church's foundations was exposed during excavation of new postholes. These foundations were composed of squared limestone blocks (004), which measured 0.15m wide by 0.14m deep in the excavated posthole (Figs. 3 & 4, Plate 4). The foundations had been covered by modern graveyard soil (005), which had built up against the church wall. Due to the limited size of the new postholes, full dimensions of the limestone foundations and any associated construction cut was not revealed.

## 5.2 18<sup>th</sup> century deposits

A gravestone (009) composed of hewn gritstone was revealed at the eastern end off the northern aisle, sealed below modern tiles and the now removed wooden supports (Fig. 3, Plate 5). This gravestone measured 0.86 m wide by 0.9m long by 0.09m high and was positioned horizontally below modern tiles (001).

The gravestone was composed of a rough gritstone and inscribed with the following text:

*'Of such is ye kingdom of heaven  
Margaret the daughter  
of Fran: Cumberland citiz: of  
Lond: & wife of S. Saunders  
was buried here feb: 12 171<sup>6</sup><sub>7</sub>  
aged 50 years'*

A reproduction of the gravestone rubbing is presented as Fig. 5.

## 5.3 Modern deposits

Modern deposits were well represented at Burley Church, spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Graveyard soil (005) composed of friable mid yellow brown sandy clay with occasional modern brick fragments had built up against the medieval foundations

(004) to a depth of 0.16m. This deposit was overlain by modern topsoil (006) friable dark grey brown sandy clay, which measured 0.14m thick (Figs. 3 & 4, Plate 4).

The earliest deposit revealed inside the church was a layer of compact, grey, crushed limestone (008), which measured 0.1m thick and was sealed by a course of tiles (007). The tiles measured 0.04m thick and were subsequently overlain by loose, grey, crushed limestone (003), which was similar to (008). The 0.18m thick hardcore was sealed by compact grey cement (002), which measured 0.06m in thickness and formed the bedding material for tiles (001) (Figs. 3 & 4, Plate 2).

Surface (001) measured 0.03m thick and was composed of interspaced glazed blue and self-coloured red tiles, which form the current church floor.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Refurbishment of the church revealed part of its external foundations. These limestone blocks probably relate to its construction in the medieval period. However, excavation was limited to a depth of 0.3m below the current ground surface, and did not expose the entirety of the foundations or any earlier material.

Work within the church exposed hardcore surfaces and tile floors, which relate to the 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration of the church. Medieval foundations were not revealed below the timber supports and probably remain preserved *in situ* beneath the Victorian restoration work.

Of most interest in this investigation was the discovery of an early eighteenth century gravestone preserved below the decayed timber supports and partially sealed by the Victorian tile floor. The gravestone of Margaret Saunders daughter of Francis Cumberland dated 1717, may

have once been embedded in the church floor. Internal gravestones are common, particularly in private chapels and this example probably once lay within the floor prior to nineteenth century renovation.

The Cumberland family have been associated with Burley on the Hill since its purchase by Daniel Finch, who had married Anne Hatton, granddaughter of Lady Margaret Sackville, countess of Pembroke and Montgomery and heir of the Earl of Cumberland (Wood, nd, 7). Margaret Saunders was probably a distant relative buried at their country home in Burley. Her body may still lie preserved under the current floor. However, as the gravestone has been disturbed, the remains may have been moved to another resting place.

## 7. CONCLUSION

A watching brief was undertaken during refurbishment at the Church of the Holy Cross, Burley on the Hill, Rutland. The watching brief monitored the removal of decayed timbers from the church floor, which supported pews and excavation of new external postholes.

This watching brief revealed a sequence of medieval, eighteenth century and modern deposits. Medieval deposits were limited to the external stone foundations. However an early eighteenth century gravestone was revealed, partially sealed below the modern floor surface. The remaining exposed foundation and floor deposits relate to renovation work undertaken in the 1870s.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the Churches Conservation Trust for commissioning this work. David Hopkins kindly reproduced Margaret Saunders

gravestone from an original rubbing. Mark Williams coordinated the project and edited this report in conjunction with Tom Lane.

## 9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Mark Williams  
 Site Supervisors: Thomas Bradley-Lovekin, Ray Holt and Michael Wood  
 Finds processing: Denise Buckley  
 Finds analysis: Dr Anne Boyle  
 Photographic reproduction: Sue Unsworth  
 Reproduction of gravestone: David Hopkins  
 CAD Illustration: Michael Wood  
 Post-excavation analysis: Michael Wood

## 10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Ekwall, E., 1989, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition).

IFA, 1999, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Pevsner, N. and Harris, J., 1989, *Lincolnshire, The Buildings of England* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, revised Antram, N.)

Williams, A & Martin, G. H. 1992 *Domesday Book, A Complete Translation*. Penguin.

Wood, C. H. (ed.) no date, *Private Printing Burley on the Hill English Life Publications Ltd.*

## 11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services  
 BGS British Geological Society  
 IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

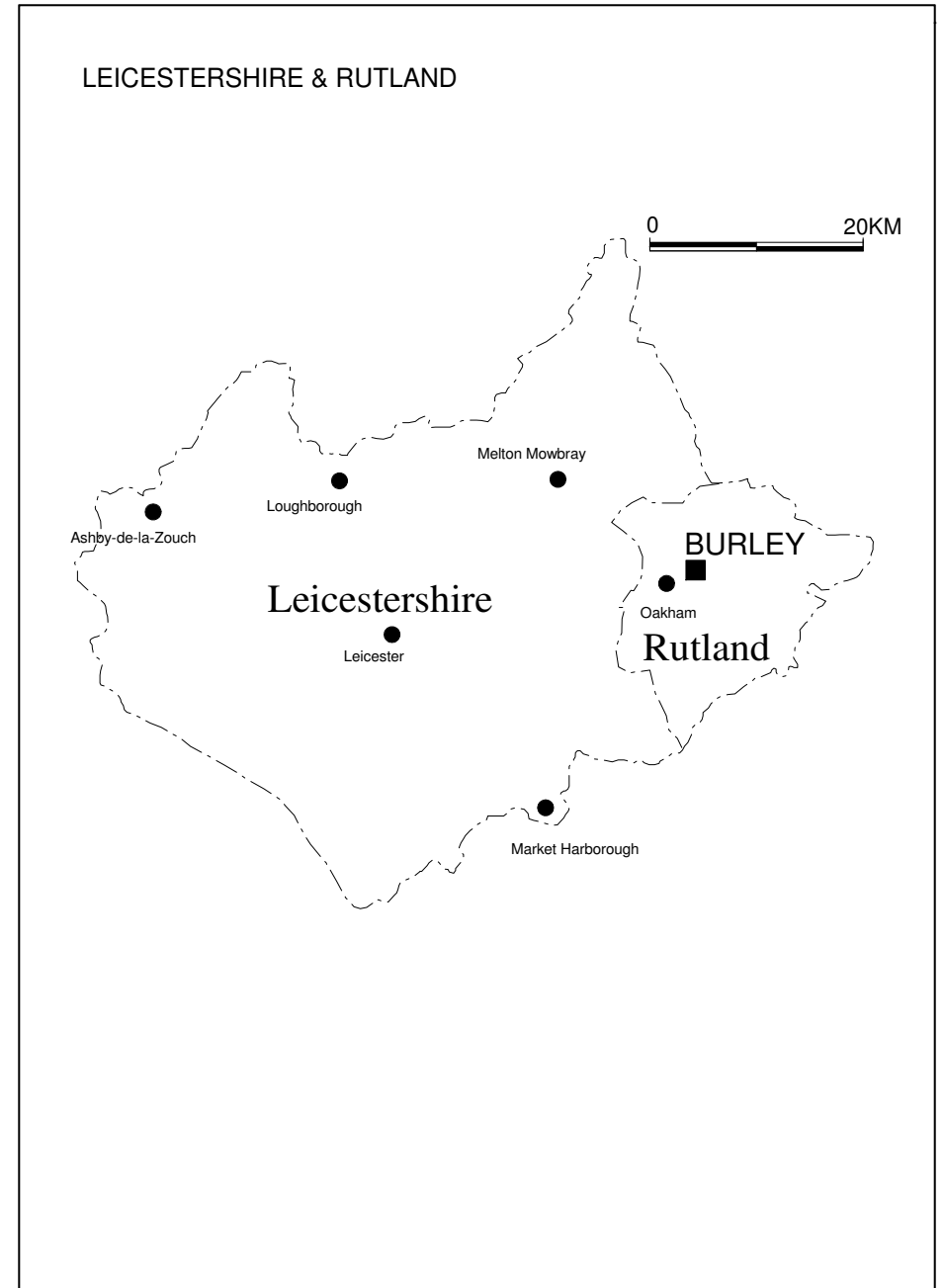
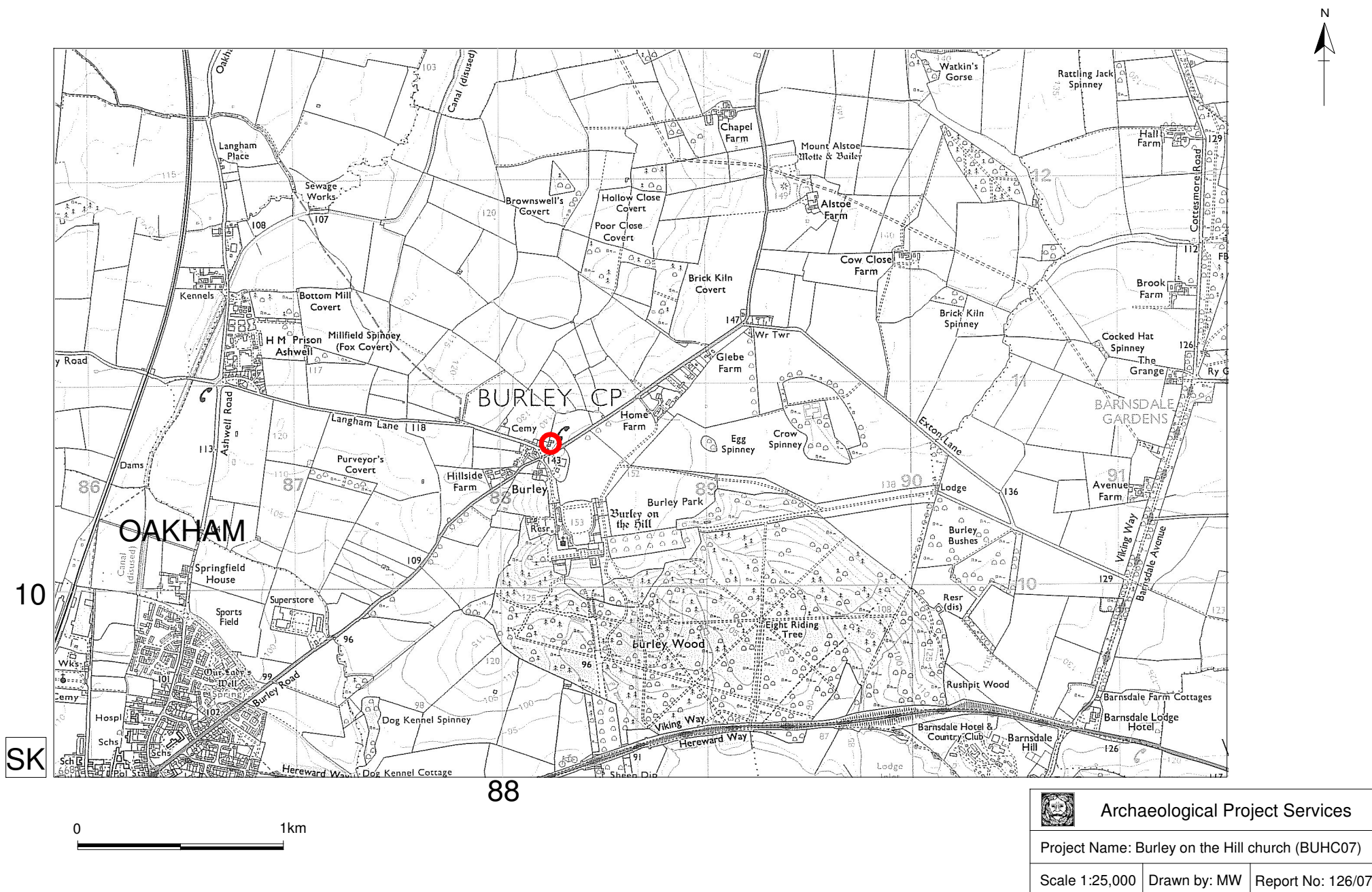


Figure 1: General location map







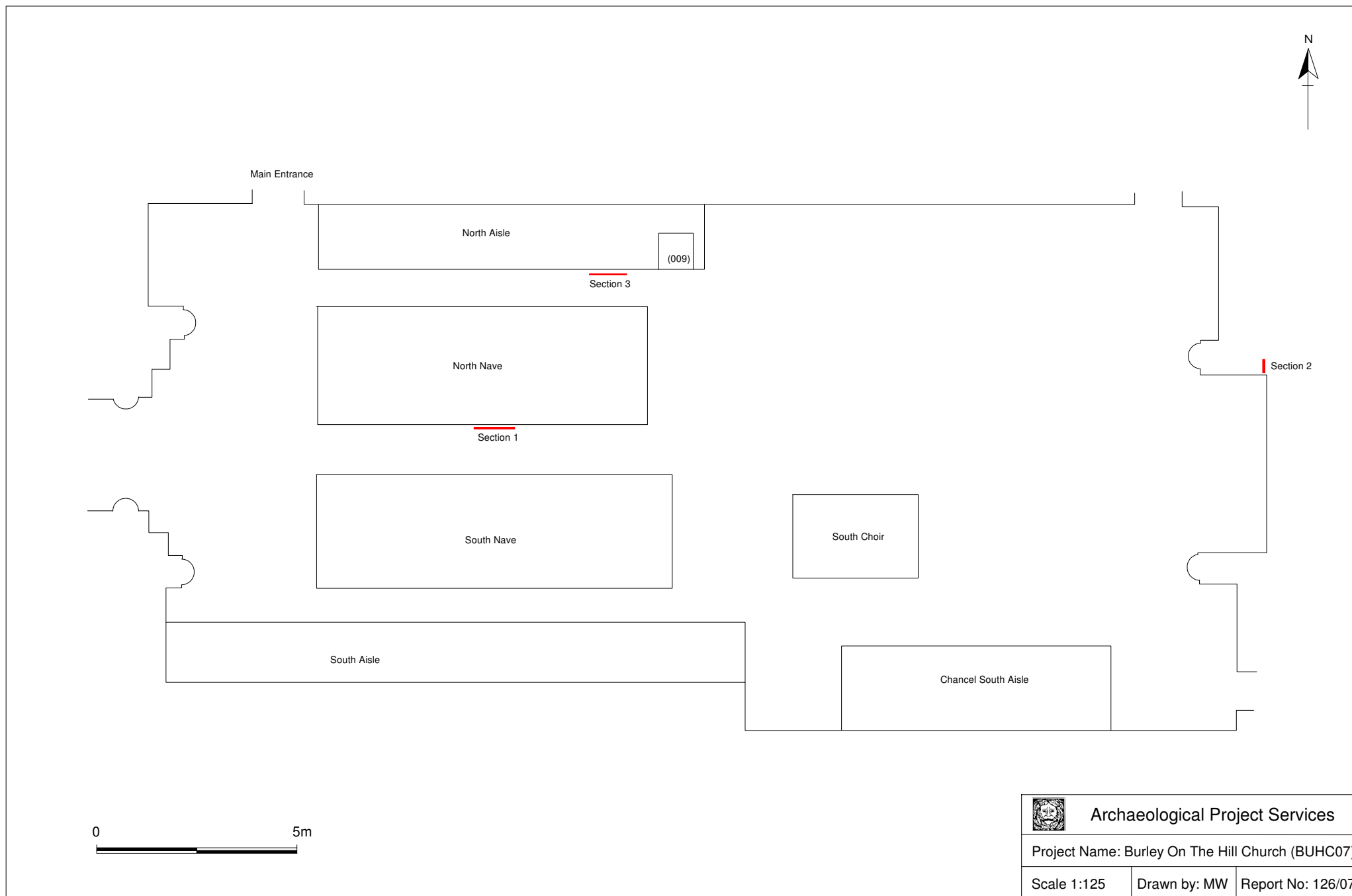
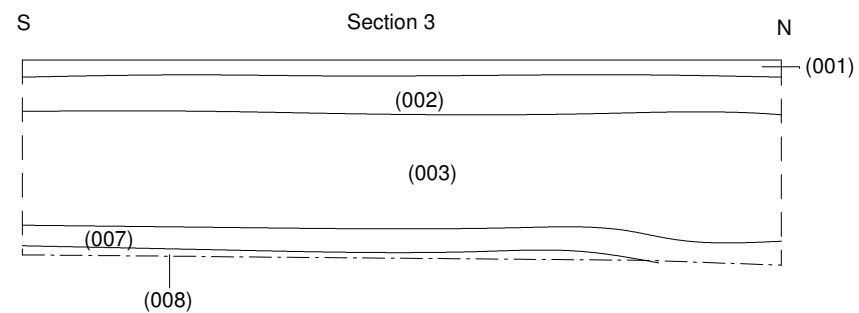
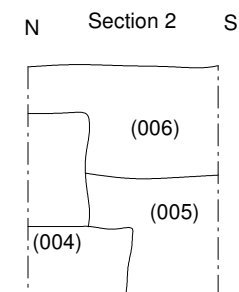
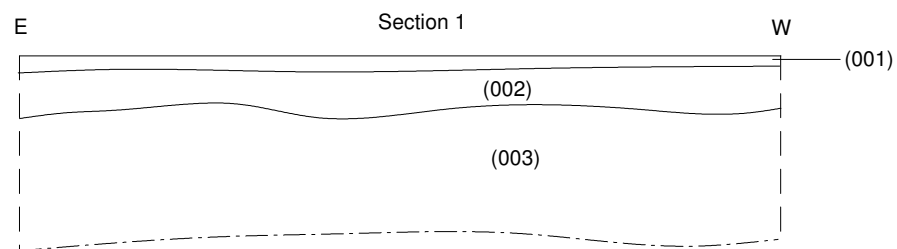


Figure 3 Church interior and location of sections





0 0.5m



Archaeological Project Services

Project Name: Burley on the Hill church (BUHC07)

Scale 1:10

Drawn by: MW

Report No: 126/07

Figure 4 Sections



*Of such is y<sup>e</sup> Kingdom of Heaven*

MARGARET the Daughter  
of Fran: Cumberland Citiz: of  
LOND: & Wife of S: Saunders  
was buried here Feb 12 1716  
Aged 50 years

0 0.25m



Archaeological Project Services

Project Name: Burley on the Hill church (BUHC07)

Scale 1:5

Drawn By: DH

Report No: 126/07

Figure 5 Margaret Saunders gravestone



## PLATES



Plate 1 Church of the Holy Cross



Plate 2 Section 1: 19<sup>th</sup> Century floor



Plate 3 Church interior after removal of damaged timbers



Plate 4 Section 2: external foundations (004)



Plate 5 Margaret Saunders gravestone



## Appendix 1

### CONTEXT SUMMARY

Context	Description	Thickness	Interpretation	Phase
001	Indurated ceramic tile	0.03m	Tile floor	19 <sup>th</sup> century
002	Compact grey cement	0.06m	Cement bedding for (001)	19 <sup>th</sup> century
003	Loose grey crushed limestone	0.18m	Hardcore platform	19 <sup>th</sup> century
004	Limestone foundations of church	0.15m by 0.14m deep	External foundations of church	Medieval
005	Friable mid yellow brown sandy clay with occasional modern brick fragments	0.16m	Graveyard soil underlies (006)	Modern
006	Friable dark grey brown sandy clay	0.14m	Topsoil	Modern
007	Indurated tile course	0.04m	Tile floor	19 <sup>th</sup> century
008	Compact grey crushed limestone	0.1m	Hardcore platform	19 <sup>th</sup> century
009	Indurated grey gritstone gravestone	0.86m wide by 0.9m long by 0.09m high	Gravestone dated 1716/7	18 <sup>th</sup> century

## Appendix 2

### THE FINDS

#### CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

*Dr. Anne Boyle*

##### Introduction

All the material was recorded at archive level in accordance with the guidelines laid out in Slowikowski *et al.* 2001. Two fragments of post medieval to early modern building material are present in (008). The fragment of brick has mortar over broken edges suggesting it has been reused. The material holds low potential for further work and is suitable for discard.

*Table 1. Ceramic Building Material Archive*

Context	Code name	Full Name	Fabric	No. of Fragments	Weight (g)	Description	Date
008	BRK	Brick	Oxidised + shale + iron	1	27	Handmade; salt surfaces; mortar including over break	16 <sup>th</sup> to 18 <sup>th</sup>
008	MODTIL	Modern tile	Vitrified	1	54	Flat roofer; mortar including over breaks; strike marks	19 <sup>th</sup> to 20 <sup>th</sup>

##### SPOT DATING

Context	Date	Comments
008	19 <sup>th</sup> to 20 <sup>th</sup>	Date on CBM

##### REFERENCES

Slowikowski, A.M., Nenk, B. and J. Pearce, 2001, *Minimum standards for the processing, recording, analysis and publication of post-Roman ceramics*, Occasional paper 2, London: Medieval Pottery Research Group.

## Appendix 3

### GLOSSARY

<b>Anglo-Saxon</b>	Pertaining to the period when Britain was occupied by peoples from northern Germany, Denmark and adjacent areas. The period dates from approximately AD 450-1066.
<b>Context</b>	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretation of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, e.g. [004].
<b>Cut</b>	A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, etc. Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.
<b>Domesday Survey</b>	A survey of property ownership in England compiled on the instruction of William I for taxation purposes in 1086 AD.
<b>Fill</b>	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) that become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
<b>Iron Age</b>	A period characterised by the introduction of Iron into the country for tools, between 800 BC and AD 50.
<b>Layer</b>	A layer is a term used to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
<b>Medieval</b>	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
<b>Natural</b>	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity
<b>Old English</b>	The language used by the Saxon (q.v.) occupants of Britain.
<b>Post hole</b>	The hole cut to take a timber post, usually in an upright position. The hole may have been dug larger than the post and contain soil or stones to support the post. Alternatively, the posthole may have been formed through the process of driving the post into the ground.
<b>Post-medieval</b>	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
<b>Prehistoric</b>	The period of human history prior to the introduction of writing. In Britain the prehistoric period lasts from the first evidence of human occupation about 500,000 BC, until the Roman invasion in the middle of the 1st century AD.
<b>Saxon</b>	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany

## Appendix 4

### THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

9	Context records
1	Context record sheet
2	Photographic record sheet
1	Section record sheet
4	Daily record sheet
1	Sheets of scale drawings
1	Stratigraphic matrix

All primary records are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services  
The Old School  
Cameron Street  
Heckington  
Sleaford  
Lincolnshire  
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Rutland County Museum  
Catmose Street  
Oakham  
Rutland  
LE15 6HW

Archaeological Project Services Site Code:	BUHC07
Oakham and Rutland Museum Accession No:	2007.65
Oasis No:	archaeo11-32136

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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