

Archaeological Evaluation at St Mary's and St Peter's Church, Tidenham, Gloucestershire



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Andrew Walsh

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the Church of St Mary and St Peter, Tidenham, Gloucestershire (NGR ST 5566 9586). It was commissioned by Ms R Nicholls of Astam, on behalf of the Friends of Tidenham Parish Church, as part of a planning application for a proposed car park.

Three trenches were excavated across the site in a grid array. The evaluation identified an undated ditch orientated approximately east to west. No finds were recovered from this feature and its origin is uncertain. The evaluation also revealed a subsoil of probable colluvial (ie natural) origin built up against the south-eastern field boundary in the lowest part of the site, which is consistent with the moderately steep topography of the site sloping down in this direction. No evidence of any other archaeological activity was identified during the evaluation and no finds were recovered during this fieldwork.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the Church of St Mary and St Peter, Tidenham, Gloucestershire (NGR ST 5566 9586). It was commissioned by Ms R Nicholls of Astam, on behalf of the Friends of Tidenham Parish Church, who intend to construct a car park, for which a planning application will be submitted to Forest of Dean District Council.

The proposed development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application.

The project conforms to a standard brief prepared by Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service (GCCAS 2015) and for which a *Written Scheme of Investigation* was produced (WA 2016). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014). The event reference for this project, given by WA, is P4781.

2 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability and documentation (WA 2016).

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Andrew Walsh (BSc; MSc; FSA Scot; ACIfA); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2013 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Elspeth Iliff (BA; MSc). The project managers responsible for the quality of the project were Tom Rogers (BA; MSc) and Derek Hurst (BA; PG Dip). Illustrations were prepared by Laura Templeton (BA; PG Cert; MCIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 List of sources consulted

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

Fieldwork was undertaken on 14 April 2016 in accordance with a detailed specification prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2016). The site reference number is P4781.

Three trenches, amounting to just over 69m² in area, were excavated over the site area of 1065m², representing a sample of c 6.5%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 180° wheeled mechanical excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve any artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature, where present. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.5 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, as evidenced, allied to the information derived from other sources.

3.6 Artefact methodology

3.6.1 Artefact recovery policy

Artefact recovery was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts were identified which were considered to be suitable for analysis.

3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.7.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

3.8 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The proposed development site occupies a rectangular-shaped field, bounded by a residential property to the north-east, an unnamed lane to the south-east, the graveyard of the Church of St Peter and St Mary to the south-west, and rough ground to the north-west. The site slopes from a height of 40m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the west to 33m AOD in the east. The underlying geology is mapped as Mercia Mudstone Group and Tintern Sandstone Foundation (BGS 2016). Superficial deposits are not mapped within the site.

The site is located in the historic core of the medieval settlement of Tidenham, immediately east of the graveyard of the Church of St Mary and St Peter (GHER8395). The tower dates to the 13th century, being the earliest surviving part of the church, although the font is thought to date to the 11th century and there was probably an earlier church on the site. Roman pottery and coins (GHER5016) were found in the graveyard during the 19th century. Ordnance Survey mapping records the site as a wood and an orchard during the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries (OS 1881, OS 1902, OS 1921, OS 1960), with the boundary of the field being in the same position.

4.2 Current land-use

The orchard had fallen out of use, developing into scrubland. This had been recently cleared.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figs 2 and 3. Deposit records relating to the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The underlying natural deposit in all trenches was an irregular orangey red sandy clay with yellow weathered sandstone (Plate 1). Irregular patches of sterile dark red sandy silt were identified across the site, as shown in Trenches 2 to 3 on Figure 2. These were determined to be natural in origin.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Undated deposits

An east to west aligned ditch was identified at the north-eastern end of Trench 1 (Fig 2). It measured 1.12m in width and 0.34m in depth (Fig 2, and Section 1; Plate 2), and was filled by a dark reddish brown sandy silt which contain moderate quantities of sandstone cobbles and occasional flecks of charcoal. No finds were recovered from the feature.

In Trench 1 and the southern half of Trench 2 a deep subsoil, probably of colluvial origin, had built up at the lower part of the site against the boundary wall of the field, sealing ditch 104 and the natural strata (102/202). Generally the subsoil measured 0.4m in depth but at the lower part of the site it measured up to 1.05m in depth.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Modern deposits

The deposits in all trenches were sealed by a reddish grey-brown sandy silt topsoil.

6 Synthesis

The evaluation identified an undated ditch orientated approximately east to west. No finds were recovered from this feature and its origin and function remained uncertain. The evaluation also revealed a subsoil of probable colluvial origin built up against the south-eastern field boundary in the lowest part of the site, which is consistent with natural soil movement on a moderately steep downwards slope in this direction. No evidence of any other archaeological activity was identified during the evaluation and no finds were recovered during the works.

7 Significance

The evaluation identified a single undated feature of archaeological origin in the southern part of the site. This feature yielded no finds, and no obvious significance could be attached to it within the scope of the evaluation.

8 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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Three trenches were excavated across the site in a grid array. The evaluation identified an undated ditch orientated approximately east to west. No finds were recovered from this feature and its origin remains uncertain. The evaluation also revealed a subsoil of probable colluvial origin built up against the south-eastern field boundary in the lowest part of the site and consistent with the moderately steep downwards slope of the site in this direction. No evidence of any other archaeological activity was identified during the evaluation and no finds were recovered during this fieldwork.

9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the conclusion of this project: Ms R Nicholls of Astam for commissioning the project, Charles Parry (GCCAS) for monitoring the work, and Peter Gilchrist (Friends of Tidenham Parish Church) and Robert Adams for their help and advice.

10 Bibliography

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OS 1881 *Gloucestershire Sheet LIV.7*, 25 inch to 1 mile,

OS 1902 *Gloucestershire Sheet LIV.7*, 25 inch to 1 mile

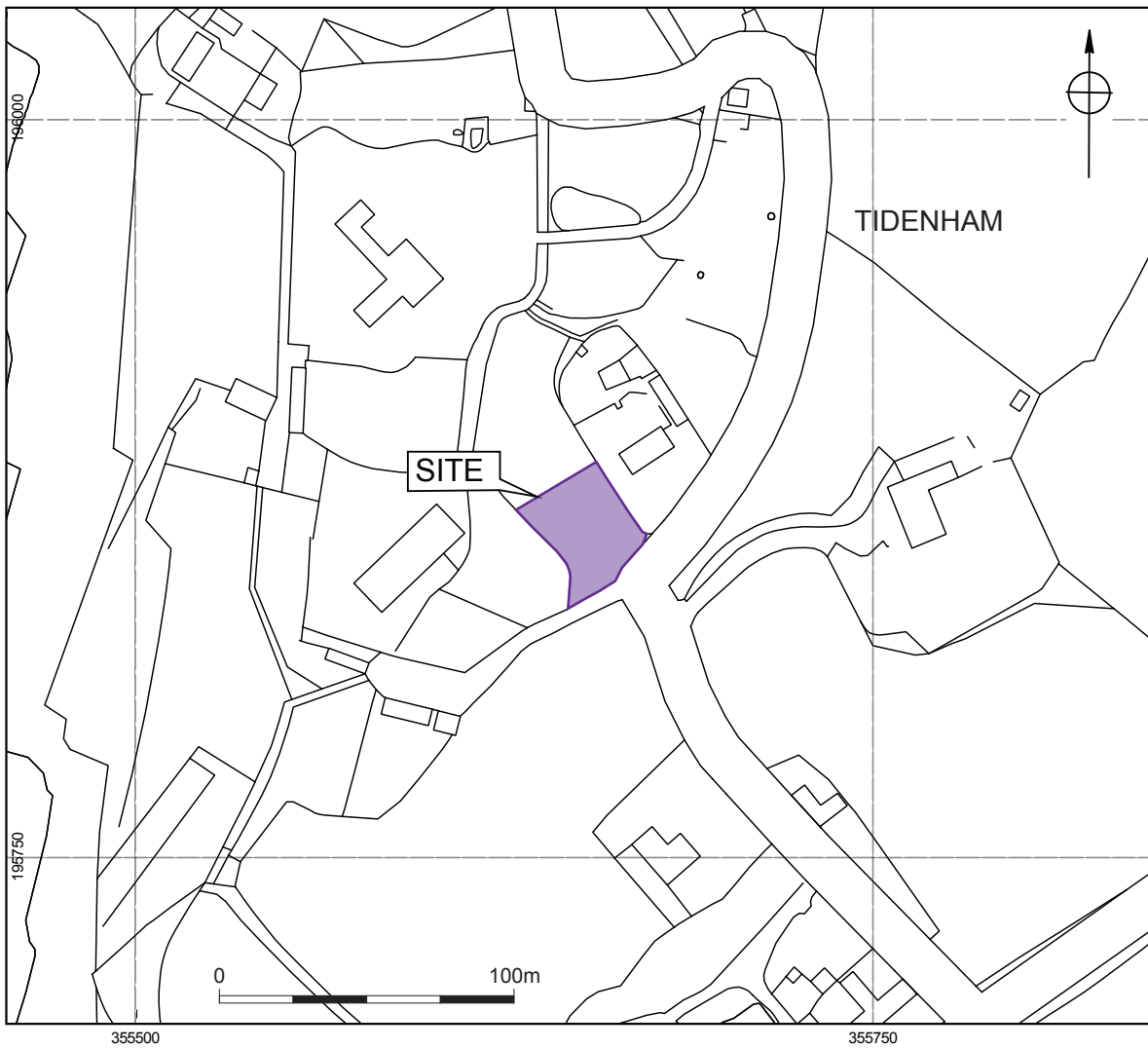
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WA 2012 *Manual of service practice, recording manual*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report **1842**

WA 2016 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation at St Mary's and St Peter's Church, Tidenham, Gloucestershire*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 11 April 2016, **P4781**

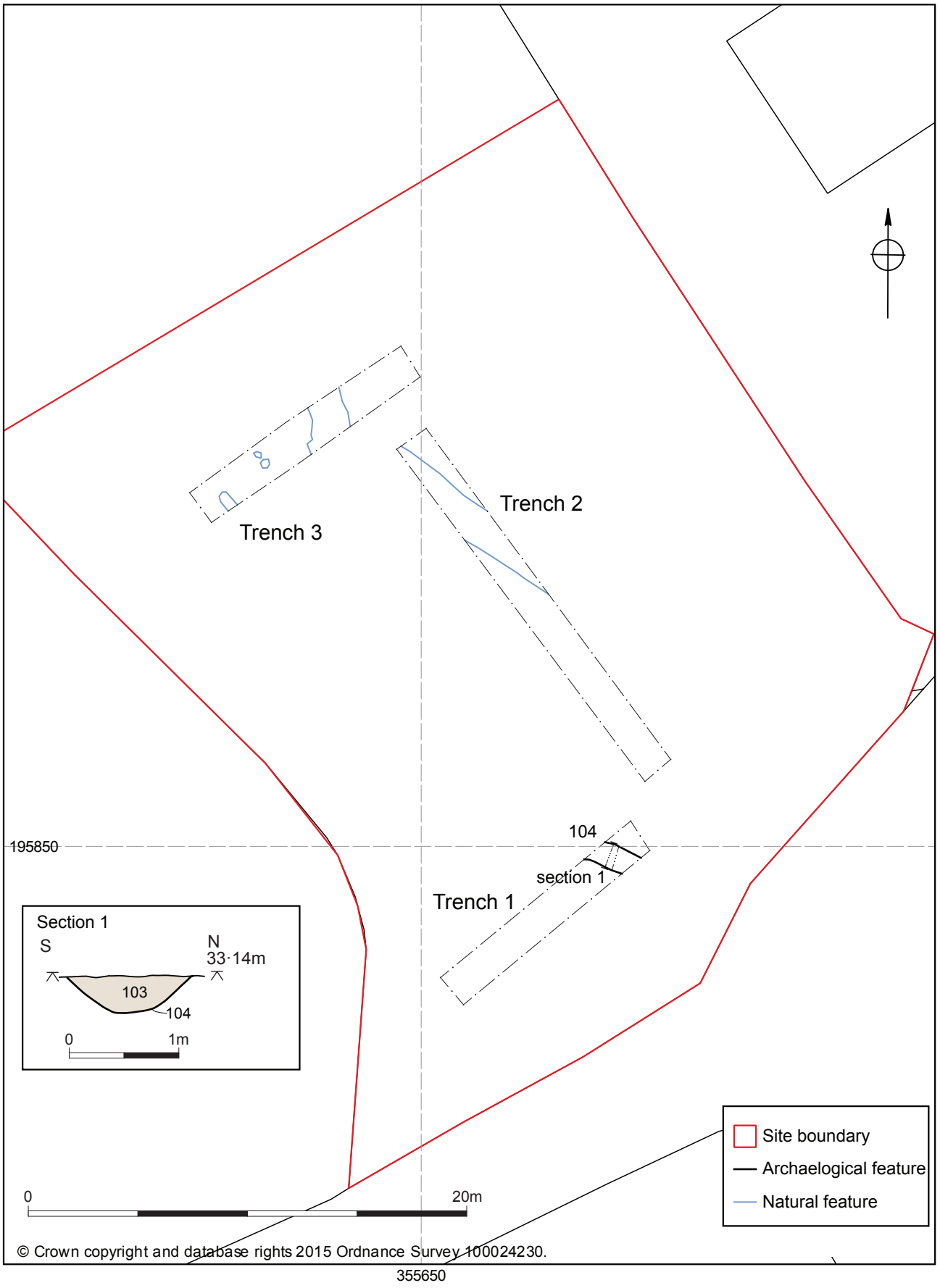
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



Plan of trenches and features and section of feature 104

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: Trench 3 looking south-west



Plate 2: Ditch 104, looking west

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 11.2m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.94m

Orientation: North-east to south-west

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Loose mid-greyish brown sandy silt	0.0-0.23m
101	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid orangey brown clayey sand	0.23-0.85m
102	Natural	Mottled brownish red and reddish orange sandy clay. Occasional yellow sandstone	0.85m+
103	Fill	Moderately compact dark reddish brown sandy silt with moderate amounts of red and yellow sandstone cobbles. Fill of ditch 104	0.85-1.22m
104	Cut	East-west aligned ditch	0.85-1.22m

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 18.7m Width: 1.5m Depth: 1.35m

Orientation: North-west to south-east

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Slightly reddish greyish brown sandy silt	0.0-0.30m
201	Subsoil	Mid-orangey brown clayey sand	0.30-1.05m
202	Natural	Mottled orangey red sandy clay with patches of weathered yellow sandstone	1.35m+

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 11.7m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.74m

Orientation: North-east to south-west

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil	Loose reddish grey brown sandy silt	0.0-0.28m
301	Subsoil	Moderately compact reddish brown clayey silt	0.28-0.67m
302	Natural	Orangey red sandy clay with yellow sandstone	0.67m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: P4781)

The archive consists of:

- 2 Context records AS1
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 31 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 1 Permatrace scale drawings AS34
- 3 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Dean Heritage Centre
Camp Mill
Soudley
Forest of Dean
Gloucestershire GL14 2UB
Tel 01594 822170
