Archaeological monitoring at St. Marys Church Woodditton

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

December 2012

Client: Purcell

OA East Report No: 1432
OASIS No: oxfordar3-139557
NGR: TL 565957 259161
Archaeological monitoring at St. Marys Church, Woodditton

Watching Brief

Site Code: WODSMC 12

CHER No. ECB3905

Date of Works: 5th - 7th December 2012

Report No: 1432

Excavator: Anthony Haskins

Client: Purcell

Report Date: December 2012
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Plate 1.  Skeleton 7 taken from west
Summary

On the 5th to 7th December 2012, OA East carried out an archaeological monitoring at St. Mary's Church, Woodditton (TL 565957 259161). The monitoring was carried out during the laying of a new water main and drainage pipe.

During the course of the works five in-situ inhumations, a coffin and a small amount of disarticulated charnel remains were uncovered. The inhumations were excavated and lifted where they would have been impacted on by the works and then reburied during the backfilling of the trench in agreement with the Church Administrator. The inhumanations are most likely to have been medieval, however no definitive dating evidence was uncovered.
1 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY
1.1.1 The church of St Marys lies to the north of the village of Wooditton and is located at a height of approximately 100m OD. The church is built on a superficial geology of Lowestoft formation deposits formed up to 2 million years ago and a bedrock geology of Lewes Nodular chalk formation (BSG, web resource).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
2.1.1 The following is taken from the HER record for Woodditton church available on the Heritage-Gateway (Web resource accessed 17/12/12). The Church of St. Mary's, Woodditton (CHER 07374), comprises a chancel with a modern north vestry and organ chamber, an aisle and clerestoried nave with a south porch, and a west tower, built throughout of flint rubble with ashlar dressings.

2.1.2 The original fabric of the church, presumably consisted only of a chancel and nave during the 1300's, was progressively enlarged by the addition of a short north aisle in the early 14th century. This was later extended to the full length of the nave, and the addition of a south aisle are dated to c.1400. Both aisles are of four bays. The piers of the south aisle are of a design found in Norfolk, reflecting Thetford Priory's ownership of the rectory.

2.1.3 The chancel was rebuilt in the mid 14th century when the arch was widened. The surviving wooden screen is of 15th century date. The only surviving 14th century window left is that at the east end of the north aisle. The other windows were remodelled in the 15th century. The windows were later changed to the perpendicular style in the 19th century (REF???).

2.1.4 Some medieval glass survives in the chancel. In the 15th century the west tower and south porch were added. The tower is square in section to above the height of the nave roof, then octagonal.

2.1.5 The church was restored between 1897-1899. The walls are made of flint rubble with dressed clunch and limestone and a slate and lead roof.

2.1.6 Church hall farm gardens (12260) are also listed on the HER but have gone and only various tree plantations around the church survive.

2.1.7 Church hall farm cottages were a series of red brick buildings dated to 1837 built directly to the west of the St. Marys Church Woodditton.

2.1.8 No archaeological features have been found within the bounds of the church to date.

3 METHODOLOGY
3.1.1 The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

3.1.2 The Brief required that all features were identified and recorded during the works.

3.1.3 The area of investigation was located along the Northern side of St. Mary's Church, Woodditton.

3.1.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's pro-forma sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
3.1.5 Site conditions were generally poor, with snow and ice on the ground initially and sleet falling on the last day of the work.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Water main

4.1.1 The trench for the water main was 23m long and 0.3m wide running largely parallel to the church’s north wall in an east to west orientation. The trench was excavated through a layer 0.2m deep of mid greyish-brown silty clay and a subsoil/grave soil mid brownish-grey clay with occasional rounded chalk fragments. Remains of five east to west aligned inhumations were uncovered in the base of this trench.

4.1.2 The upper torso of the first inhumation (1) was located in the trench as it came away from the church wall where the water pipe entered the building. The inhumation was in a grave 0.9m deep. Due to the nature of the surrounding grave yard soil it was not possible to discern the grave cut (3). The fill of the grave was a mid brownish-grey silty clay. The skeleton was lying prone with its arms along its sides.

4.1.3 The second inhumation was aligned along the trench the side of the trench so only the skull and the left hand side were visible (4). The burial was again at 0.9m and as with the first burial it was not possible to identify a grave cut (6). The fill was again a mid brownish-grey silty clay (5).

4.1.4 The third inhumation (7) was moderately well preserved with some badly eroded and spongy bone especially in the region of the spine. The skeleton was lying in a prone position with its arms along it’s side; the right arm was partially beneath the pelvis. The grave cut (9) was not identifiable within the trench and as with the other graves the fill (8) was a mid brownish-grey silty clay.

4.1.5 The fourth inhumation (10) was 0.8m deep the upper body was largely protected by a mid to light brownish-grey silty clay (11). The legs were in a very poor state of preservation although it is not clear whether this was an earlier burial or that the change in the soil caused different diagenesis to occur. The grave cut (12) was again not visible during the works.

4.1.6 The final the skeletal remains in the final in-situ inhumation were not exposed during the works. However, wood staining and coffin furniture were identified along the northern edge of the trench at 0.8m depth. The grave (13) was 1.4m in length and had a visible width of about 0.15m and filled with a mid to dark brownish grey silty clay (14).

4.1.7 A single French jetton probably of the “shield of France” type, struck as one of the stock issues in Tournai between c.1415 and 1497 (Faine pers. Comm.) was recovered from un-stratified material within the water pipe trench.

4.2 Drainage run

4.2.1 The drainage run was 0.3m wide and initially excavated to 0.9m up against the western end of the church to pick up the sewage pipe from the newly installed toilet. The sewage run then ran 4m in an east-west direction rising up to 0.5m depth to a manhole cover.

4.2.2 The run then ran at 0.5m depth along a north-west to south-east orientation for 7m into a second manhole cover. A large patch of mortar, flint and stone was encountered at
3.5m along this stretch of the trench which was only visible in the southern section of the trench and is likely to be part of the foundation of the church tower.

4.2.3 The second manhole cover was located such that it met up with the water pipe trench. The trench was then excavated for a further 5m in a north-east to south-west orientation. This then ran into a trench 10m long and 0.9m wide excavated to 0.5m depth.

4.2.4 Apart from the tower foundations no further archaeological deposits were located and the entirety of the trench was excavated through a layer of mid greyish-brown silty clay topsoil on average 0.2m deep with a subsoil/graveyard soil of mid brownish-grey silty clay.

5 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

5.1 **Water pipe trench**

5.1.1 Beyond the inhumations no other archaeological deposits were encountered in this trench. The nature of the grave yard soil and the fills of the graves made it impossible to discern grave cuts but the presence of wood staining from one coffin would suggest the other burials were shrouded, this interpretation can be supported by the close proximity of the arms to the sides of the body.

5.1.2 The inhumations were lifted where they would have been impacted on by the trenching. They were reburied as near to where they were originally located during the backfilling of the trench with agreement with the church administrator. The visible portion of skeleton 1 was lifted, along with skeleton 4 and 7. Skeleton 10 was left in-situ.

5.2 **The drainage trench**

5.2.1 The only significant archaeological feature within this trench was the patch of mortar flint and stone. Due to it's location it is most likely associated with the foundations for the church tower.

6 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

6.1.1 The author would like to thank Purcell who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay.

6.1.2 The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, who visited the site and monitored the watching brief.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

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Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt: Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS 5

Please select all techniques used:

- Field Observation (periodic visits)
- Full Excavation (100%)
- Full Survey
- Geophysical Survey
- Open-Area Excavation
- Part Excavation
- Part Survey
- Recorded Observation
- Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
- Salvage Excavation
- Systematic Field Walking
- Systematic Metal Detector Survey
- Test Pit Survey
- Watching Brief

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the NMR Monument Type Thesaurus and significant finds using the MDA Object type Thesaurus together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state “none”.

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### Project Originators

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<th>OA EAST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Brief Originator</td>
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<td>Project Design Originator</td>
<td>Stephen Macaulay - OA East</td>
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<td>Project Manager</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Anthony Haskins</td>
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### Project Archives

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### Archive Contents/Media

#### Physical Contents
- Animal Bones
- Ceramics
- Environmental
- Glass
- Human Bones
- Industrial
- Leather
- Metal
- Stratigraphic
- Survey
- Textiles
- Wood
- Worked Bone
- Worked Stone/Lithic
- None
- Other

#### Digital Contents
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- Worked Bone
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- None
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#### Paper Contents
- Animal Bones
- Ceramics
- Environmental
- Glass
- Human Bones
- Industrial
- Leather
- Metal
- Stratigraphic
- Survey
- Textiles
- Wood
- Worked Bone
- Worked Stone/Lithic
- None
- Other

#### Digital Media
- Database
- GIS
- Geophysics
- Images
- Illustrations
- Moving Image
- Spreadsheets
- Survey
- Text
- Virtual Reality

#### Paper Media
- Aerial Photos
- Context Sheet
- Correspondence
- Diary
- Drawing
- Manuscript
- Map
- Matrices
- Microfilm
- Misc.
- Research/Notes
- Photos
- Plans
- Report
- Sections
- Survey

### Notes:
Figure 1: Site location

St Mary's Church
Figure 2: Location of works and human skeletal remains

Drainage Run

Coffin Wood Staining 13

Water Pipe

Skeleton 1

Skull left In-Situ

Skeleton 7

Skeleton 4

St Mary's Church

Skeleton 10
Figure 3: Sketch plans of human skeletal remains within pipe trench
Plate 1: Skeleton 7 taken from the west