

# **CHURCH OF ST PETER, SIBTHORPE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE:**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING OF GROUNDWORKS WITHIN THE TOWER AND CHURCHYARD**

**2019**

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**Faculty Number: 2017-010598**

**Contractor Project Code: SPS**

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## **SUMMARY**

- During 2019, Matt Hurford Historic Buildings and Archaeological Services was commissioned by Sibthorpe Parochial Church Council to carry out archaeological monitoring during the excavation of groundworks at the Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire centred on National Grid Reference SK 76393 45412. The work is in response to proposals to insert a toilet into the tower which will necessitate the lowering of the floor level within the tower (Area 01) and the excavation of two trenches extending westwards through the churchyard, one from the west wall of the tower (Area 02) and one from the south wall of the tower (Area 03). The work was carried out in accordance with faculty requirements (2017-010598) and adhered to the recommendations made by Dr Chris Brooke and Dr Mike Hawkes, the DAC Archaeological Advisors'.
- The objective of the archaeological work was to ensure that any archaeological information present was recorded appropriately and the results presented within a report.
- St Peter's Church is largely built of coursed local skerry which is a very fine-grained dolomitic sandstone with oolitic and shelly limestone used for the carved work such as door mouldings, windows and buttresses. The church principally dates to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with the chancel built in connection with the foundation of a collage of priests in 1324. The thirteenth century tower is of two stages with a restored fourteenth century doorway in the west wall. The original north and south aisles were demolished in the seventeenth century with the nave undergoing much reconstruction in the early eighteenth century. Further restoration work was begun in 1853 included on the tower arch. The vestry was added in the late nineteenth century. Electricity was first installed in the church in 1966 (Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project 2019).
- Excavations within the church tower revealed a number of deposits relating to a succession of former floors, the earliest potentially dating to the fifteenth century with the latest being of Victorian date, overlaying the thirteenth century tower foundations. The tower arch foundations contained brickwork almost certainly laid in 1718/19 which was partially re-built during the restoration of the 1850s. A former flue, later used to house the 1966 electric cable, extended west to east across the southern half of the tower from the nave to a chimney in the south-west corner of the tower. The trenches extending through the churchyard had a basic stratigraphy of two deposits comprising topsoil with grave earth beneath which contained small quantities of fragmentary skeletal material in Area 03. In the deeper trench, Area 02, natural substrata was encountered. The medieval foundations of the tower were identified in Area 03.
- The presence of multi-period stratigraphy within the tower would suggest that other areas within the church, notably the chancel, which have been relatively unaffected by later restorations will have similar levels of preservation.

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#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The project was managed, and the fieldwork undertaken, by Matt. Hurford. Much appreciated on site co-operation was provided by the staff of Kirk & Bills. Monitoring was by Dr Chris Brooke and Dr Mike Hawkes, the DAC Archaeological Advisors'. Thanks are extended to Sibthorpe Parochial Church Council for commissioning the work. Lee Elliott is thanked for his assistance in identifying the Cistercian ware pottery from within the tower and Dr Chris Brooke for providing the references establishing the date of the eighteenth century restoration.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1. During 2019, Matt Hurford Historic Buildings and Archaeological Services was commissioned by Sibthorpe Parochial Church Council to carry out archaeological monitoring during the excavation of groundworks at the Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire centred on National Grid Reference SK 76393 45412 (Figure 1). The work is in response to proposals to insert a toilet into the tower which will necessitate the lowering of the floor level within the tower and the excavation of two trenches extending westwards through the churchyard, one from the west wall of the tower and one from the south wall of the tower (Figure 2).

1.2. The work was carried out in accordance with faculty requirements (2017-010598) and adhered to the recommendations made by Dr Chris Brooke, the DAC Archaeological Advisor.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

2.1. The objective of the archaeological work was:

- To ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme and the recording of any archaeological remains encountered during the groundworks and the results presented within a report (preservation by record).

2.2. The proposed work comprised:

- The excavation of Area 01: the lowering of the floor levels within the tower by up to 0.25m with Box 01, measuring 1m x 1m and 0.5m in depth dug in the north-west corner to facilitate the drilling of a hole through the west wall of the tower for a service pipe (Figures 2 and 3).
- The excavation of Area 02: a service trench extending from the west wall of the tower, through the churchyard to Church Lane to the west. It was up to 0.6m in width, 0.75m in depth and 19m in length (Figure 2).
- The excavation of Area 03: a service trench extending from the south wall of the tower, through the churchyard to connect with Area 02 to the east of the churchyard boundary. It was up to 0.6m in width, 0.45m in depth and 11m in length (Figure 2).

2.3. The groundworks were excavated by staff of the main contractor under the observation by the archaeologist (watching brief).

2.4. The recording was to result in 'the preparation of a report and ordered archive', in line with the guidelines of the CIFA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, (Standard and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief published December 2014).

## **3. SITE BACKGROUND**

3.1. The village of Sibthorpe is centred on SK 76322 45541, around seven miles to the south-west of Newark. The church lies at c. 17.84m OD. The British Geological Survey shows that the underlying bedrock geology is Edwalton Member Mudstone with no superficial deposits recorded (British Geological Survey 2019).

### **3.2. History & Fabric**

3.2.1 St Peter's Church is largely built of coursed local skerry which is a very fine-grained dolomitic sandstone with oolitic and shelly limestone used for the carved work such as door mouldings, windows and buttresses. The church principally dates to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with a particularly fine chancel built in connection with the foundation of a collage of priests in 1324. The

thirteenth century tower is of two stages with a restored fourteenth century doorway in the west wall with moulded impost, hood mould and mask stops with a rectangular light above. The original north and south aisles were demolished in the seventeenth century (Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project 2019). An order relating to repair work on the church walls dates to 04/06/1718 (AN/PB/334/659/2) with a certificate confirming that the work had been completed dating to 18/04/1719 (AN/PB/334/659/3). Further restoration work was undertaken during the following century when it is recorded in 1858 that the graceful tower arch had been opened out during the works began in 1853. The vestry was added in the late nineteenth century. Electricity was first installed in the church in 1966 (Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project 2019).

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

4.1 The groundwork was carried out under archaeological observation. All deposits were inspected in order to identify any archaeological remains of interest in particular those medieval or earlier in date, (including church foundations). Where possible these were cleaned by hand, examined and recorded.

4.2. Recording of all groundworks included the position and depths of the excavations and the deposits exposed, by drawing (both in section and plan where applicable) and photograph.

4.3. Prior to backfilling spoil heaps were inspected for any datable or significant archaeological artefacts.

4.4. All identifiable deposits were given unique individual four-digit context numbers e.g. 0001, 0002 etc. starting at 0001.

4.5. All saved artefacts were to be given individual three letter finds codes e.g. AAA, AAB.

4.6. Disarticulated human remains found in the confines of the work were to be recorded appropriately and left on site for reburial. Advice from the Diocese Archaeological Advisor would be sought if articulated remains were present

#### **5. RESULTS**

5.1. The groundworks comprised excavation of three areas (Figures 2 and 3). Area 01 was located within the tower and entailed the lowering of the floor levels by up to 0.25m with Box 01, measuring 1m x 1m and 0.5m in depth, dug in the north-west corner to facilitate the drilling of a hole through the west wall of the tower for a service pipe. Area 02 was a service trench extending from the west wall of the tower, through the churchyard to Church Lane to the west. It was up to 0.6m in width, 0.75m in depth and 19m in length. Area 03 was also a service trench extending from the south wall of the tower, through the churchyard to connect with Area 02 to the east of the churchyard boundary. It was up to 0.6m in width, 0.45m in depth and 11m in length.

##### **5.2. Area 01 (Figure 2-7 and Plates 1-6)**

5.2.1. The thirteenth century foundations 0114 and 0115 of the tower were encountered in Box 01 comprising thinly coursed angular sandstone bonded with dark brown sandy clay loam. Three courses were exposed exceeding 0.24m in depth. Further thirteenth century foundations 0117 were exposed by the west doorway. They had been truncated by the insertion in the fourteenth century of the doorway and recently by electric cables.

5.2.2. In the base of Box 01 was well compacted dark greyish brown clay loam deposit 0113 which contained charcoal flecks and pinkish white to white lime mortar fragments. It was essentially the

same deposit as 0112 though it did not contain limestone rubble. Deposit 0112, which incorporated deposits 0118 and 0120, was up to 0.22m thick and overlaid the foundations 0114 and 0115. Of note, 0112 contained a single piece of squat rounded and probably flared Cistercian ware pottery of fifteenth or sixteenth century date (Lee Elliott pers comm) providing a *terminus post quem* for the deposit. In the south-east corner of the tower, above 0112, was mortar deposit 0111. It was 0.03m thick and had a smooth upper surface suggesting that this is a fragment of a former mortar floor. It seems likely that 0112 and 0113 are thus levelling deposits for the mortar floor 0111, the pottery suggesting that it could have been laid as early as the fifteenth century.

5.2.3 The tower walls exposed in the east and south facing sections of Box 01 had a white to pinkish white lime plaster which terminated 0.18m above foundations 0114 and 0115 and was overlaid by layer 0103. The plaster therefore pre-dates the current floor 0101 which is of likely Victorian date (see below).

5.2.4 During the excavation, the tower arch foundations 0107 were exposed and found to comprise two courses of hand-made bricks measuring  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$  inches, with those supporting the northern part of the tower arch on a clay loam levelling deposit 0119 and bonded with brown sandy lime mortar. The lower course of the southern brickwork was also bonded with brown sandy lime mortar but the upper course with white mortar, identical to that used in the east wall of the tower and the tower arch, 0105 and 0106 respectively. The size of the bricks would be consistent with an interpretation that they were laid when the nave was restored in 1718/19 with the foundations to the south partially re-laid during the subsequent restoration which began in 1853 when the tower arch was opened out.

5.2.5 Overlying foundations 0107 was deposit 0104 which comprised loose angular stone, up to 0.16m thick above which was a thin layer of crushed white and pink lime mortar 0103. Both are likely to be levelling deposits for a no longer extant floor possibly laid during the eighteenth century restoration.

5.2.6 Truncating 0104 and 0103 was trench 0108 that housed a brick conduit 0108a that comprised a row of parallel bricks 0.5m apart and two courses high extending across the southern half of the tower. It had a concrete capping and a brick base. The bricks measured  $9 \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 3$  inches, were laid in stretcher bond and were bonded with a grey concrete mortar. Inside the conduit the bricks and capping were sooted. The bricks of the conduit were tied into a vertical brick structure which extended through the ceiling above in the south-west corner of the tower. The only possible interpretation is that the conduit is the flue a no longer extant heating system used to take smoke from a former fire, probably a cast iron stove located within the nave, beneath the floors of the building to the chimney in the tower. These were popular during the Victorian period (Roberts 2008) with the bricks of 0108a consistent with a mid to late nineteenth century date.

5.2.7 Post-dating 0103, and 0108 was a 0.04m thick mortar bedding layer for tile floor 0101 which extended across the entire tower floor and comprised red and black tiles, laid in a chequered pattern. Each tile was  $6\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{4} \times 1$  inch thick. The floor was probably laid during the Victorian period. However, it should be noted that the flue 0108a was re-used to house the electric cable of 1966. This necessitated the lifting of the floor 0101 and bedding layer 0102 by the west doorway to allow access to the former flue and the truncation its northern brick courses to allow the electric cable to be fed along it into the nave. In recent years the floor was truncated for electric cables by the west door and tower arch 0110.

### **5.3. Area 02 (Figures 2 and Plate 7)**

5.3.1. The excavation of Area 02 revealed a basic stratigraphy of three deposits comprising topsoil 0200, grave earth 0201 and natural substrata 0202. The topsoil 0200, which extended to a maximum depth of 0.19m, consisted of a weal dark brown silty clay loam. Beneath 0200 was grave earth 0201, which was up to 0.42m thick and comprised firm dark brown silty clay with no disarticulated human

remains present. Firm strong brown silty clay natural substrata 0202 was encountered below 0201.

#### **5.4. Area 03 (Figures 2 and 8-10 and Plates 8)**

5.4.1. A basic stratigraphy of two deposits was present in Area 03 comprising topsoil 0300 and grave earth 0301 which were the same as described above in Area 02 though small amounts of disarticulated skeletal material were present in the grave earth. The stepped foundations 0302 of the tower were encountered in the south facing section extending to a depth exceeding 0.43m from ground level. Four sandstone courses were exposed bonded with firm dark brown sandy clay loam. Two pieces of red tile, ½ inch thick, had been incorporated into the foundation. No foundations for the nave were identified. Though poor foundations for churches are common it is unlikely that nave walls would have been built on grave earth with no foundations. It is feasible that the nave wall considerably overhangs the foundations which is why they were not encountered in the sections.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

6.1. Multi-period stratigraphy extending from the present, potentially to the fifteenth century, survived within the tower. The probability of earlier medieval layers being preserved below would have to be considered to be high. The work suggests that intact stratigraphy from the medieval and post-medieval periods are likely to be present in other areas within the church which remained relatively unaffected by the restorations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, notably the chancel.

6.2. The complete absence of *in-situ* burials or other significant archaeological remains encountered during the trenching through the churchyard is likely to be due to the limited scope of the work carried out which ensured that the destructive impact on the archaeology was minimal.

## **REFERENCES**

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AN/PB/334/659/3., 4 June 1718 – 18 April 1719 *Parochial visitation order & Certificate, Sibthorpe, Newark Deanery, 4.6.1718 – 18.4.1719* Manuscript and Special Archives Collection at Nottingham University.

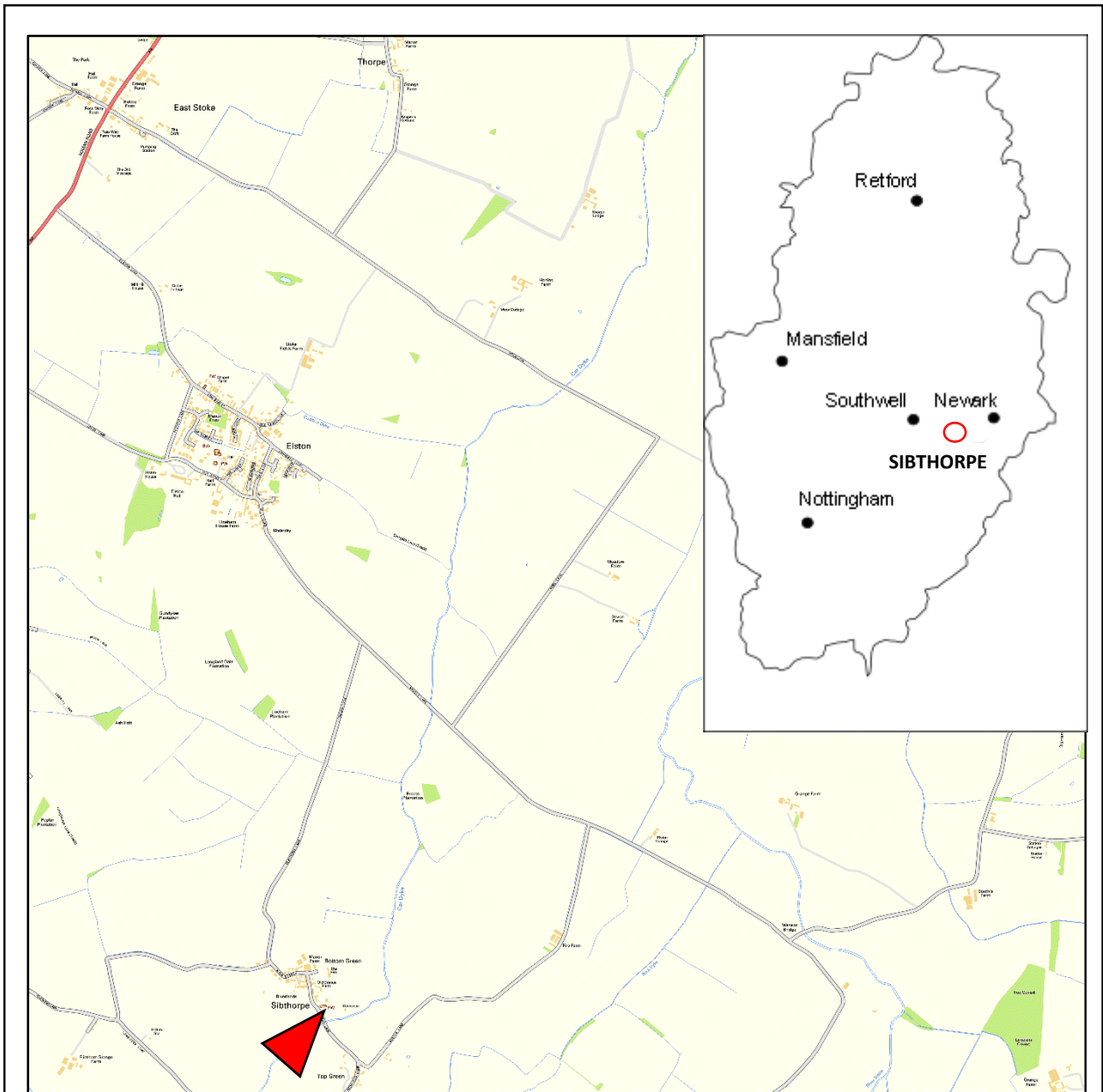
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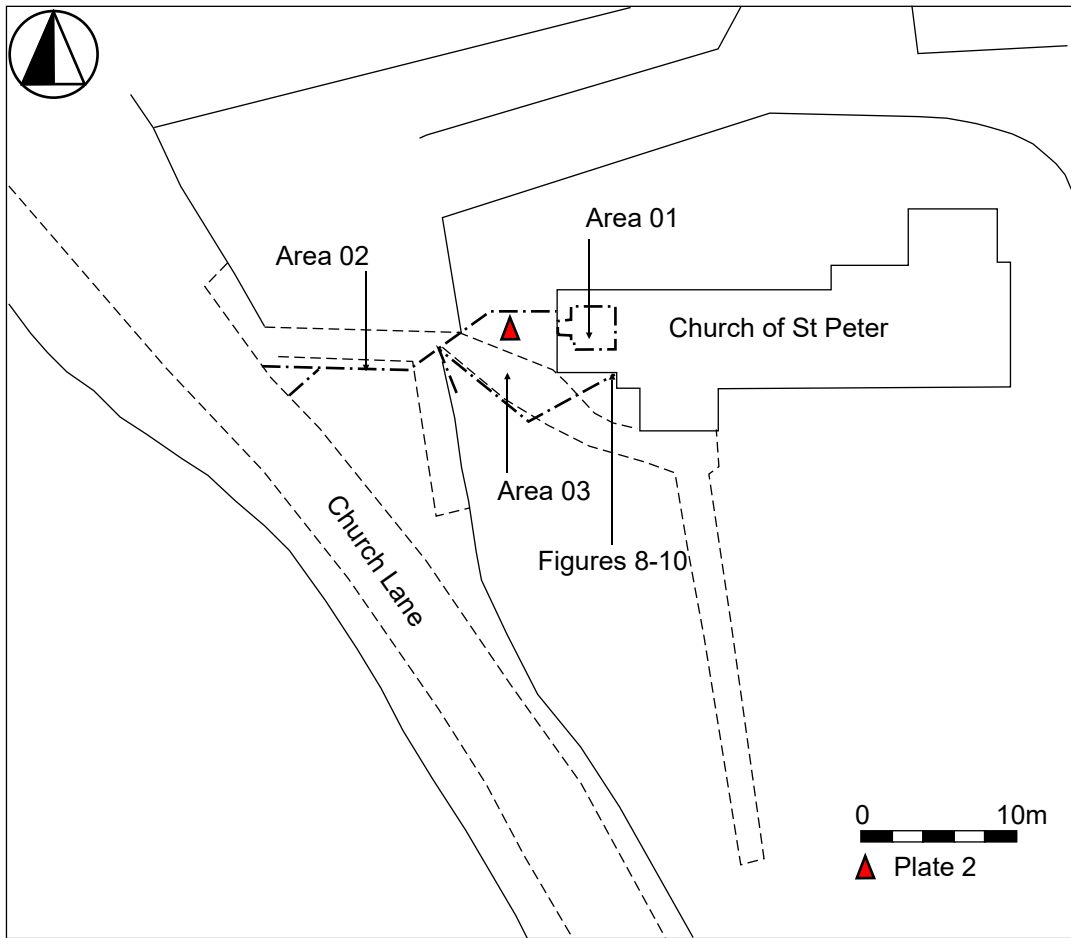
Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project 2019 *Sibthorpe St Peter*, accessed 10/09/2019, <<https://southwellchurch.history.nottingham.ac.uk/elston/histro.php>>.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014 *Standard and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief*.

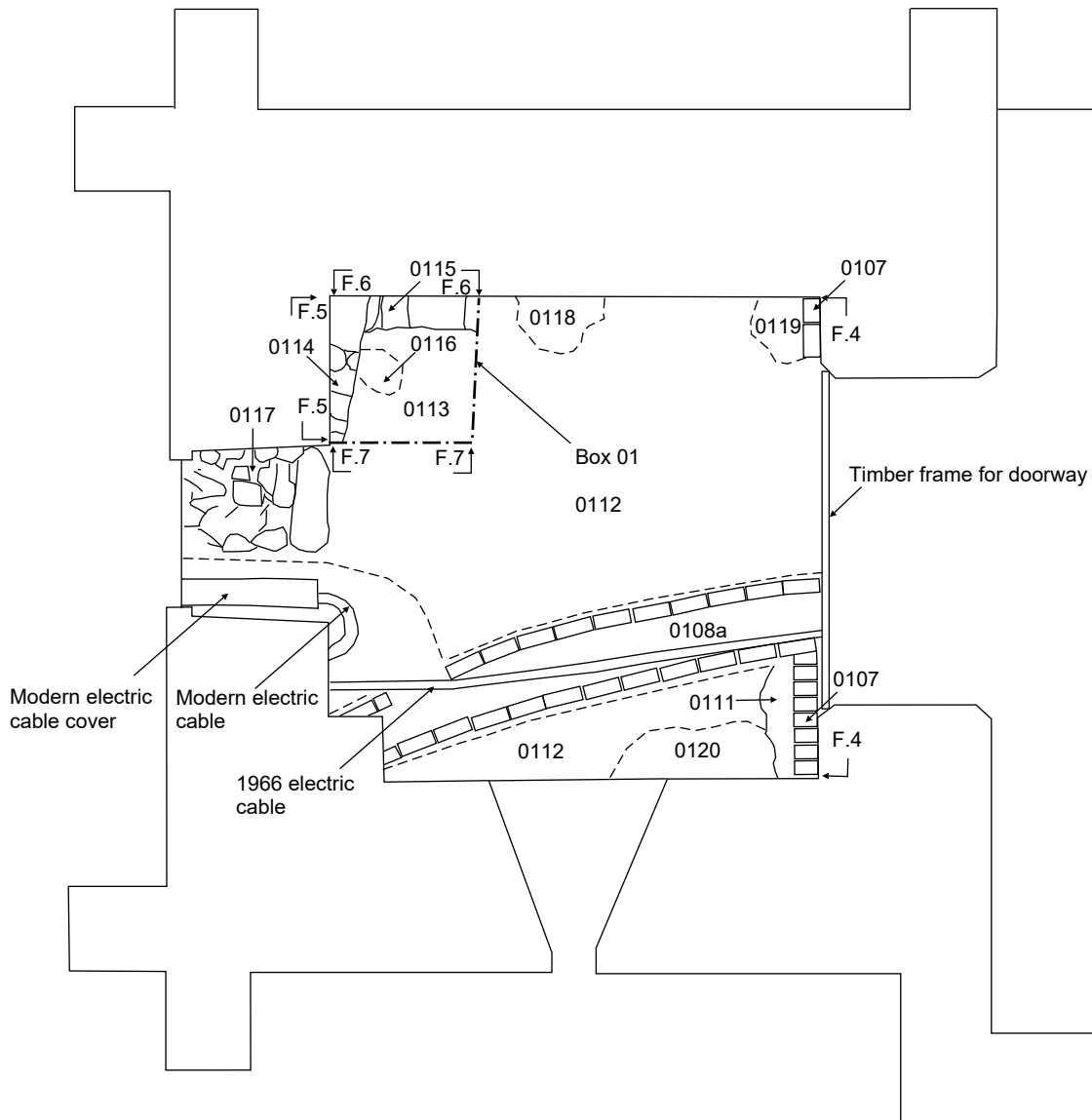




SPS Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire.  
Figure 1: Site location. Principal map scale 1:20,000. Insert not to scale.  
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2019.



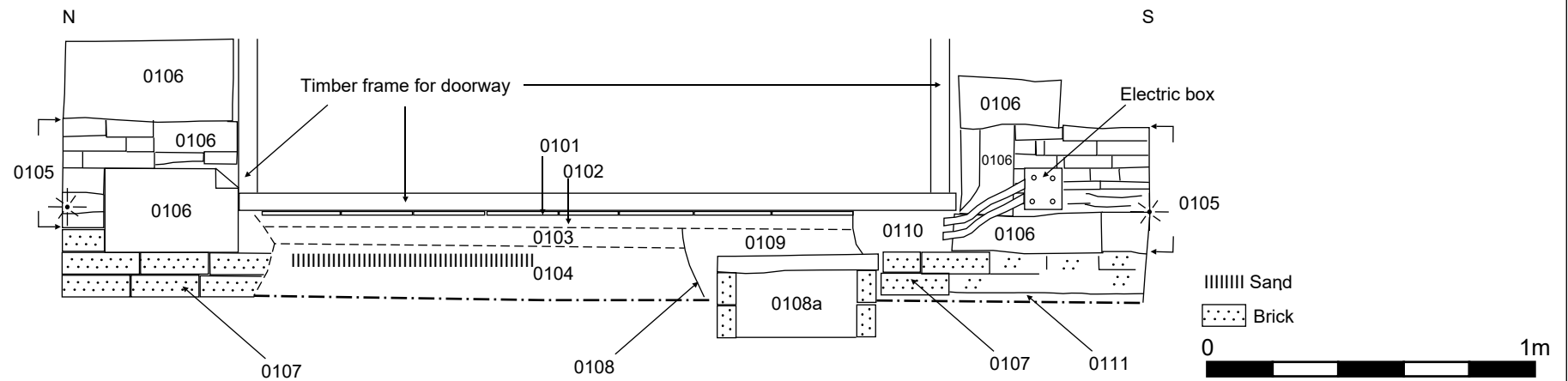
SPS Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire.  
Figure 2: Trench location plan.  
Scale 1:500 at A4.



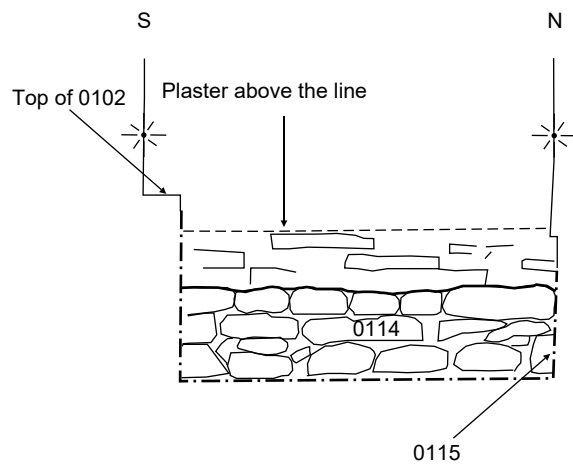
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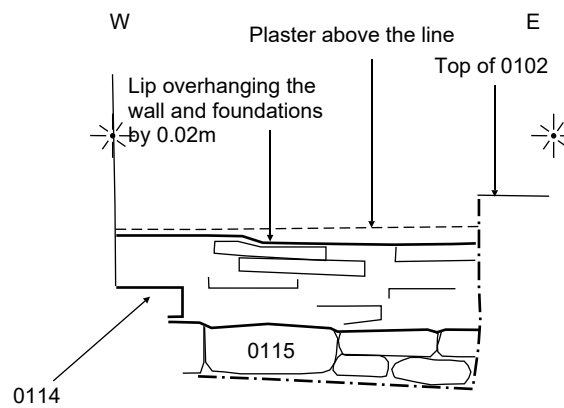
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Figure 3: Area 01 post excavation plan.  
Scale 1:50 at A4.



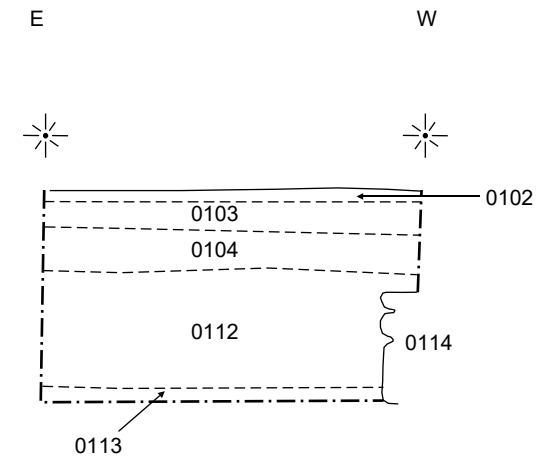
SPS Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire.  
 Figure 4: Area 01 west facing section beneath the tower arch.  
 Scale 1:20 at A3.



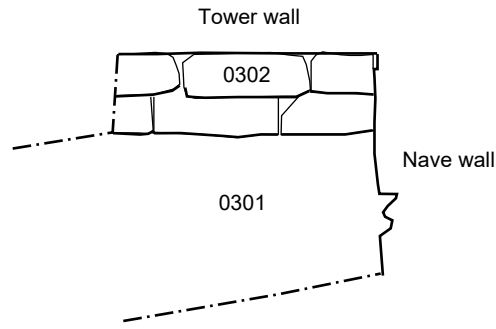
SPS Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire.  
 Figure 5: Area 01 east facing section of Box 01.  
 Scale 1:20 at A3.



SPS Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire.  
 Figure 6: Area 01 south facing section of Box 01.  
 Scale 1:20 at A3.

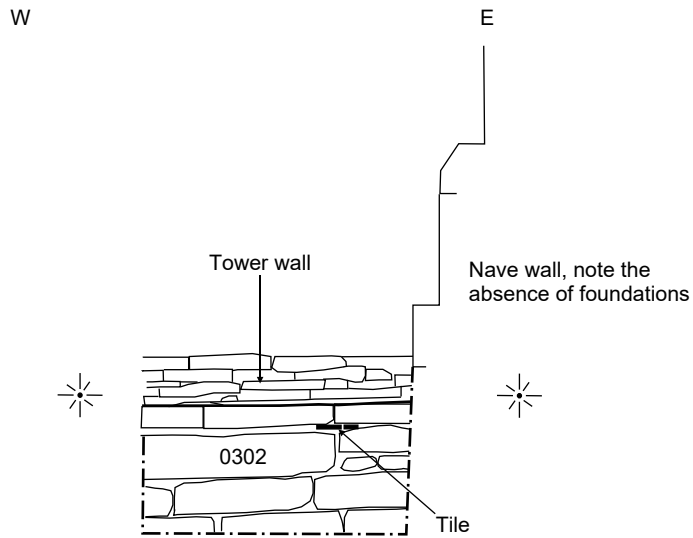


SPS Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire.  
 Figure 7: Area 01 north facing section of Box 01.  
 Scale 1:20 at A3.



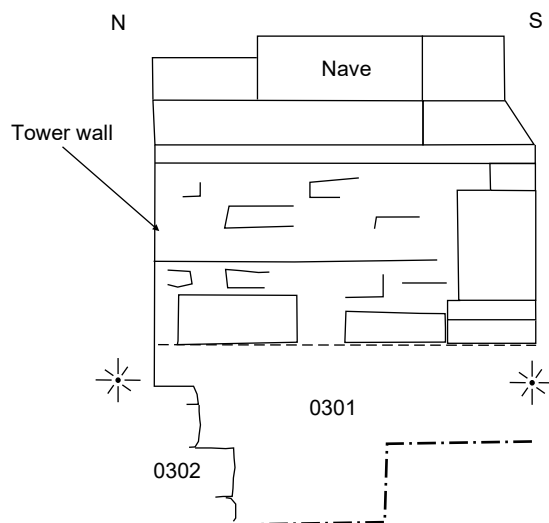
SPS Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire.

Figure 8: Area 03 post excavation plan of the tower foundations 0302 at the east end of the trench.  
Scale 1:20 at A4.



SPS Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire.

Figure 9: Area 03 south facing section of the tower foundations 0302 at the east end of the trench.  
Scale 1:20 at A4.



SPS Church of St Peter, Sibthorpe, Nottinghamshire.

Figure 10: Area 03 west facing section of the tower foundations 0302 at the east end of the trench.  
Scale 1:20 at A4.



**Plate 1:** Area 01 general view looking west.



**Plate 2:** Area 01 general view from the doorway in the west elevation, looking east.



**Plate 3:** Area 01, Box 1 with foundations 0114 and 0115 exposed and deposits 0113 and 0116 in the base of the trench, viewed looking north-west.



**Plate 4:** Area 01, the former chimney in the south-west corner of the tower and flue 0108a truncated by the electric cable of 1966, viewed looking south-west.



**Plate 5:** Area 01, foundation 0117, clearly truncated by the modern electric cable, viewed looking west.



**Plate 6:** Area 01 west facing section beneath the tower arch, viewed looking east.



**Plate 7:** Area 02, representative section, south facing, located centrally between the churchyard wall and the tower, viewed looking north.



**Plate 8:** Area 03, tower foundation 0302, viewed looking east. Note that the nave wall to the east has no foundations.

## Appendix 1 Context Summary

Context	Area Description	Interpretation
<b>Area 01</b>		
0101	Red and black tiles laid in a chequered pattern, tiles 6¼ x 6¼ x 1 inch thick extending over the whole floor bedded in 0102. Truncated by modern pipe 0110.	Tile floor of the tower, Victorian partially re-laid due to insertion of electricity.
0102	Hard mortar, 0.04m thick, 7.5YR 7/3 pink to 6/3 light brown, 15% tiny white inclusions. Overlays brick conduit 0108.	Mortar bedding for 0101.
0103	Crushed mortar, 0.06m thick, 7.5YR 8/1 white to 7/3 pink. Truncated by brick conduit 0108.	Levelling layer for no longer extant floor associated either with the restoration of the nave in the 18 <sup>th</sup> century or later works.
0104	Loose angular stone deposit, up to 0.16m thick, stones unworked, sandstone up to 70mm x 50mm in size with a lens of loose sand 7.5YR 6/4 light brown within. Truncated by 0108 and overlies brick foundations 0107.	Levelling of the tower floor associated either with the restoration of the nave in the 18 <sup>th</sup> century or later works.
0105	Tower arch walls, coursed sandstone, worked, average size 11 x 2½ inches bonded with 7.5YR 8/1 white mortar. Above 0107.	Recorded in 1858 that the graceful tower arch had been opened out during the restoration began in 1853.
0106	Tower arch jambs, limestone bonded with 7.5YR 8/1 white mortar. Pyramid stops and straight chamfers. Above 0107.	Recorded in 1858 that the graceful tower arch had been opened out during the restoration began in 1853.
0107	Hand-made bricks 8½ x 4½ x 2¼ bonded with sandy lime mortar 7.5YR 6/4 brown and in the south side both sandy lime mortar 7.5YR 6/4 brown and 7.5YR 8/1 white mortar. Overlain by 0104.	Foundations for tower arch, size would be consistent with an 18 <sup>th</sup> century date with those of the south side re-laid during the restoration began in 1853 as they had the same mortar as the tower arch masonry.
0108	Concave cut, 0.33m in depth and up to 0.64m in width, extending across the southern part of the tower floor infilled with brick conduit 0108a and 0109.	Trench for the Victorian flue 0108a.
0108a	Parallel bricks, two courses high laid in stretcher bond with a concrete capping and brick base extending from east to the chimney in the south-west corner of the tower. Walls and underneath of the capping are smoke blackened. Bricks measure 9 x 4½ x 3 inches and are bonded with sandy mortar 7.5YR 6/1 grey.	Flue extending from the nave to the chimney in the tower. Bricks indicate Victorian date
0109	Loose sandy loam 7.5 YR 4/2 brown.	Fill of 0108.
0110	Modern plastic pipe and sandy fill truncation 0108.	Associated with modern electric.



0111	Very hard mortar, flat surface, exceeds 0.03m thick, 7.5YR pink, <1% charcoal flecks. Overlays 0112, truncated by 0108. Only present in the south-east corner of the tower.	Former floor, possibly associated with levelling layer 0112 which contained a piece of Cistercian Ware pottery dating to the 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century. Likely to have extended across the whole floor but removed and replaced by 0104 during 18 <sup>th</sup> century or later restorations. Likely 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century in date.
0112	In Box 01. 0.22m thick deposit of well compacted clay loam 10YR 3/2 dark greyish brown, 60% angular sandstone up to 150mm x 100mm, 5% lime mortar 7.5YR 8/1 pinkish white to 7/2 pinkish grey, <1% charcoal flecks. Contained a single piece of squat rounded and probably flared Cistercian ware of 15 <sup>th</sup> to 16 <sup>th</sup> century date. It was at a depth of between 10mm and 20mm. Overlies foundations 0114 and 0115 of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century tower.	Levelling layer for floor 0111, 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century.
0113	In Box 01. Well compacted clay loam 10YR 3/2 dark greyish brown, <1% charcoal and mortar flecks. Exceeds 0.04m in depth.	Essentially the same as 0112 but without the rubble - levelling layer for floor 0111, 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century.
0114	In Box 01. North to south aligned limestone extending up to 0.22m from the west wall, angular, coursed stones up to 0.32m x 0.06m, exceed 0.24m in depth, bonded with firm sandy clay loam 7.5YR 3/4 dark brown. Three courses exposed.	Tower, west wall, foundation 13 <sup>th</sup> century.
0115	In Box 01. West to east aligned limestone extending up to 0.11m from the north wall, angular, coursed stones up to 0.38m x 0.05m, exceed 0.24m in depth, bonded with firm sandy clay loam 7.5YR 3/4 dark brown. Two courses exposed.	Tower, west wall, foundation 13 <sup>th</sup> century.
0116	Loose sand 7.5YR 5/6 strong brown, <1% charcoal flecks.	Spread within 0113 - levelling layer for floor 0111, 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century.
0117	Located by the doorway in the west of the tower, spread of angular pieces of sandstone exceeding 1m x 0.8m and exceeding 0.4m in depth, truncated by modern electric cables to the south, made of stones up to 0.3m x 0.1m in size, up to 0.08m thick bonded with firm sandy clay loam 7.5YR 3/4 dark brown.	Continuation of the tower foundations truncated by the insertion of the 14 <sup>th</sup> century doorway.
0118	Firm clay loam 7.5YR 3/3 very dark brown, 10% mortar flecks, 1% charcoal flecks, <5% limestone fragments up to 50mm x 80mm.	Spread within 0112 - Levelling layer for floor 0111, 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century.
0119	Weak clay loam 10YR 4/4 dark yellowish brown with 5% mortar flecks, below 0107 west part.	18 <sup>th</sup> century levelling for foundations.
0120	Firm clay loam 7.5YR 3/3 very dark brown, 10% mortar flecks, 1% charcoal flecks, 10% limestone fragments up to 120mm x 10mm.	Spread within 0112 - Levelling layer for floor 0111, 15 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> century.
<b>Area 02</b>		
0200	Weak silty clay loam 7.5YR 3/3 dark brown, 15% roots tiny and fibrous, average thickness 0.12m.	Top soil.

0201	Firm silty clay 7.5YR 3/3 dark brown. Average thickness 0.42m.	Grave earth. No disarticulated skeletal material present.
0202	Firm silty clay 7.5YR 5/6 strong brown.	Natural substrata.
<b>Area 03</b>		
0300	Weak silty clay loam 7.5YR 3/3 dark brown, 15% roots tiny and fibrous, average thickness 0.15m.	Top soil.
0301	Firm silty clay 7.5YR 3/3 dark brown. Average thickness 0.42m.	Grave earth. Small quantities of disarticulated skeletal material present.
0302	Limestone foundations, four courses exposed exceeding 0.35m in depth and extend up to 0.23m from the wall of the tower. Stones are limestone, up to 0.29m in length and 0.09m thick and are bonded with firm sandy clay loam 7.5YR 3/4 dark brown. Incorporated within the stonework are two tile fragments, ½ inch thick 2.5YR 5/6 red in colour. Overlain by 0300	13 <sup>th</sup> century tower foundations.