



DARNLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES



Archaeological Watching Brief on collapsed drain at Parish Church of St Margaret of Antioch, Rochester, Kent ME1 1UF

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Report for: Mr Ray Shuter

Watching Brief Report

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1. Abstract

This Watching Brief report is the result of an application for Schedule of Works Proposal at St Margaret of Antioch Church, Rochester, made by Mr Ray Shuter (Buildings Manager), The Rev. Dr Joel Love (Vicar) and Mr Peter Cornell (Churchwarden) for the replacement of an existing drain in the Church grounds, which has collapsed (Ref: 2018-017905). Consent was given by the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Rochester, and the contractor's work commenced on the 5th March 2018. The drain and the surrounding material proved to be archaeological sterile as much of the surrounding material proved to be modern backfill.

2. Location

St Margaret of Antioch Church is located at TQ 7402 6806 and lies approximately 600m south-southwest of Rochester Castle (TQ 7415 6860). St Margaret of Antioch Church is a Grade II* Listed Building, No 1086400 (see fig 1):

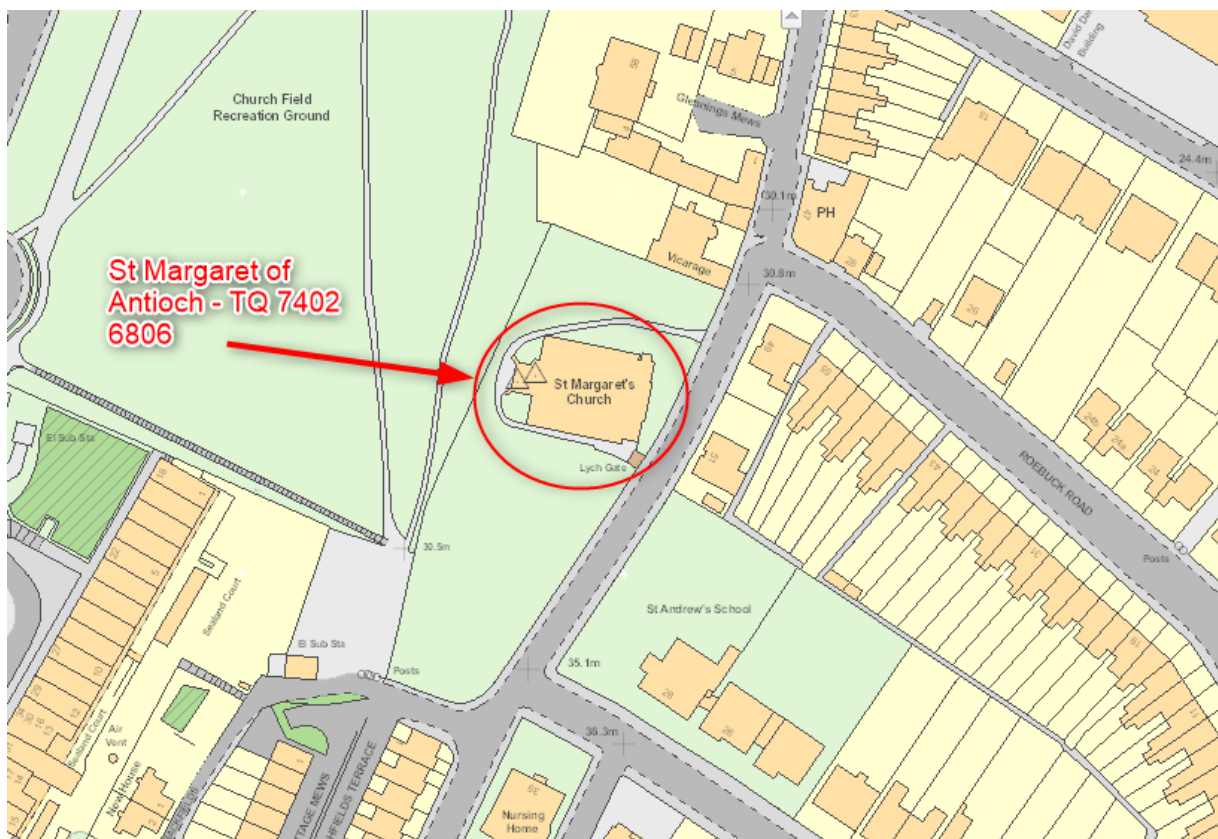


Fig 1 – the location of St Margaret of Antioch Church, Rochester. Scale 1:1250

3. Description

The Parish Church of St Margaret of Antioch is a Grade II* Listed Building. The west tower of c.1458-65; nave and chancel with north and south aisles (with galleries) 1823-4 by Sydney Smirke; sanctuary with side vestries 1839-40 by Richard Hussey; 'Decorated' style east window inserted 1872. West tower, random rubble ragstone with some flint dressings, the rest presumably of brick, stuccoed throughout; Welsh slate roof. Tower has 3 stages with northeast polygonal stair turret; battlements; diagonal buttresses with flint panels and 3 set-offs. Double belfry openings; single trefoil-headed lancet to each face of middle stage.

Perpendicular 3-light west window over moulded doorway with label. Nave (includes chancel), 5 bays, 2 tiers of windows all under elliptically-headed arches between broad pilasters. Deeply overhanging eaves and verges, the latter in the form of pediments. Sanctuary, lower with flanking offices, the east end with pedimented verges; 3 light 'Decorated' east window with original recessed round-headed window to offices.

4. Methodology

The Watching Brief Specification requires the observation of all groundworks (i.e. excavation and removal of the collapsed drain). The collapsed drain was located approximately 3.0m to the north-west from the entrance of the west tower (see fig 2 – trench marked in red):

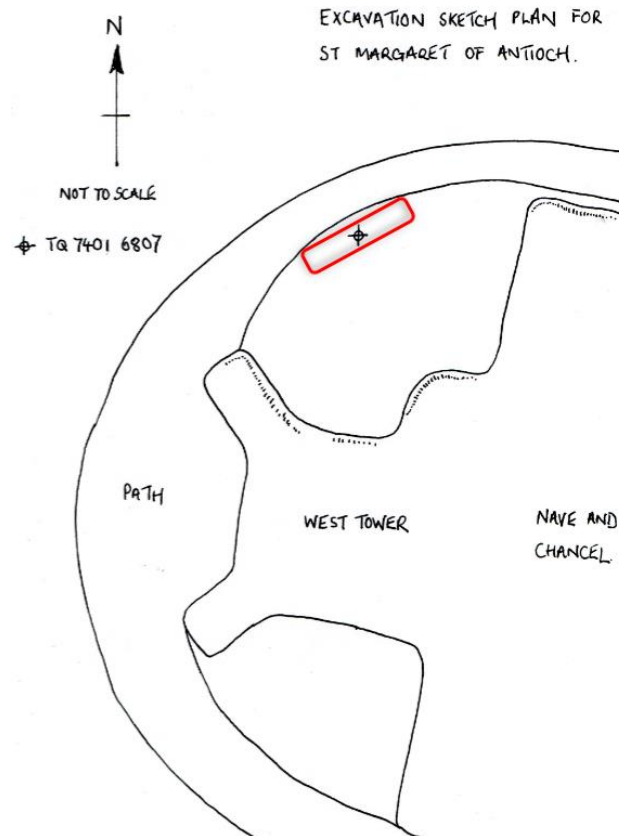


Fig 2 – Excavation sketch plan for the replacement of an existing drain, St Margaret of Antioch

A Risk Assessment was drawn up for the duration of the Watching Brief, and the trench was excavated by hand shovel. An archaeologist was on site to observe all ground works on 5th March 2018. All visible contexts were recorded, photographs of the groundworks were taken, and any finds bagged and processed, all of which were carried out in accordance with *Chartered Institute for Archaeologist* protocols. No constraints were experienced while carrying out the duties of the watching brief.

5. Results

Given a probable earlier replacement of the drain sometime in the last 20 years the likelihood of preserved historical artefacts or interred human remains was deemed to be low.

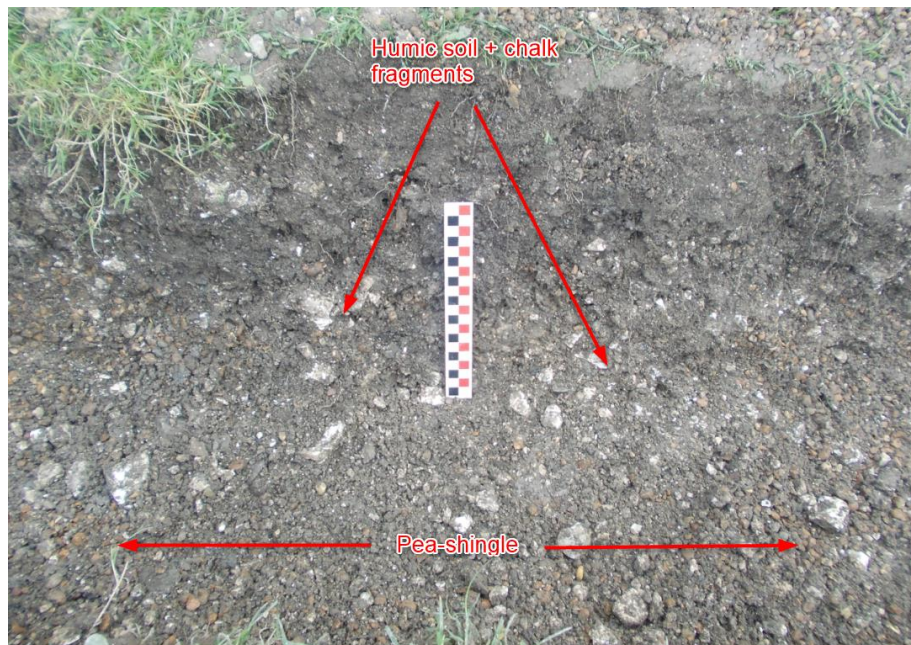
A rectangular trench approximately 2000mm x 300mm, at a varied depth of 250-300mm, was hand-dug and spoil around the existing drain removed. The spoil was deposited next to the trench and

consisted of dark humic topsoil, chalk fragments and compacted pea-shingle; the latter was probably deposited when a previous drain was lain/repared. No archaeological artefacts were observed in the removed spoil (see fig 3).



(Fig 3 – excavation trench in the foreground, looking north-west)

Upon removal of the collapsed drain, the trench base and sides were cleaned, which revealed further compacted modern pea-shingle stratigraphically above a layer of dark humic soil containing numerous chalk fragments; probably an earlier backfill layer (see figs 4&5). No archaeological artefacts were found or observed during the cleaning.



(Fig 4 – south-east facing section showing layer of dark humic soil containing numerous chalk fragments; probably an earlier backfill layer)



(Fig 5 – trench looking south-east showing compact layer of pea shingle following removal of collapsed drain)

6. Interpretation

The results from the Watching Brief confirm that no archaeological structures, features or artefacts were observed in the excavation trench, although any later investigation in other areas of the site (i.e. the Church and its grounds) may prove to be archaeologically significant.

7. Conclusion

The Archaeological Watching Brief has fulfilled the aims and objectives of the Specification. As far as it is known, no buried archaeological features or artefacts have been affected as a result of the groundworks.

8. Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are extended to Mr Ray Shuter (Buildings Manager) for permissions to access the site, and the building contractor for his help and compliance when conducting the groundworks on 5th March 2018.

9. References

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk>

<http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.ExploringKentsPast.Web.Sites.Public>

<https://historicengland.org.uk>

Richard Taylor

