



**WATCHING BRIEF ON DRAINAGE TRENCHING AT ST PETER'S
CHURCH, PEBWORTH**

September 2020

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Cover imager: Postcard Image of St Peter's Church dated c. 1913

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Dr George Nash was commissioned by Arnold Bartosch Ltd. (Contact: Mike Joy) on behalf of the PCC of St Peter's Church, Pebworth to undertake an archaeological watching brief on a proposed drainage scheme that will carry roof rainwater run-off via replacement ground drainage to a soakaway.¹ The scheme included the excavation of c. 18 linear metres of trenching (including a c. 4m spur) and the construction of a soakaway drain (located immediately north of a southern boundary wall that delineates the old churchyard with a later extension). The proposed drainage system replaces an existing failed system that has become silted-up and redundant.

St Peters Church has been designated a Grade I Listed Building and as such²:

The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) England Order 2010 makes it clear that the expression extends to church buildings, their contents and anything fixed thereto as well as to anything situated within the curtilage of a church building (which includes the churchyard - i.e. the curtilage of the church).

Although the village is in Warwickshire, the church is within the Gloucester Diocese. This fieldwork is in response to a condition requested by the DAC archaeologist (Dr David Thackray). Detailed specifications concerning the drainage scheme was included in *Specification for Drainage Works at St Peter's Church, Pebworth (Gloucester Diocese)* (Job No. 2706 – issued Feb 2020), issued by Arnold Bartosch.



Figure 1. Location of the Site (circled in red)

¹ A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was submitted to the DAC Archaeologist and approved in July 2020.

² See Appendix 1

Dr Nash is a full Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) and an associate member of the IHBC. Dr Nash's work is undertaken to the highest professional standards. This document has been prepared with reference to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for Watching Briefs* 2014 (Updated June 2020).

2.0 LOCATION

St Peter's Church is a Grade I listed building located within the western part of the village of Pebworth, standing around 70m AOD (NGR SP 12863 46901). The principal approach to the church is from the south, although a road entering the village from the west circumnavigates the churchyard from all compass points (except the south). Interestingly (and similar to other medieval churches) the site stands outside the modern core of the village.

3.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The village of Pebworth has its origins to the Domesday Book inventory (1086), if not earlier. At this time the village was in the ownership of Hugh de Grandmesil where he held two hides and one virgate. According to this inventory, within the village were three ploughs and one villan and one border and seven slaves. It is probable that during this period an ecclesiastical building stood, probably in the same location as the present building. It is more that likely that a nucleated settlement lay close to the church.

The earliest date for the current church building and its sub-circular churchyard is to the 14th century³, with additions to the building being made during the 15th and 16th centuries.⁴ The building is constructed of local limestone block and rubble walling and comprises a west tower, nave, south and north aisles, chancel and porch. The building (nave and aisles) supports a timber-framed roof covered with clay plain tiling, with terne-coated stainless steel to the aisle. The north and south aisles were added to the nave during the 15th century. The proposed drainage scheme will extend from the south aisle's south-facing elevation. Based upon the OS map (Scale 1:2500) of 1885, little or no change has occurred to the church and churchyard (except of a later churchyard extension south of the original churchyard curtilage) (**Figure 2**).

³ Perpendicular in architectural style (Pevsner 1968, 233)

⁴ Pevsner (1968, 133) states that a 13th century window single light window is present within the chancel, suggesting that the fabric sections of the building could be much earlier.

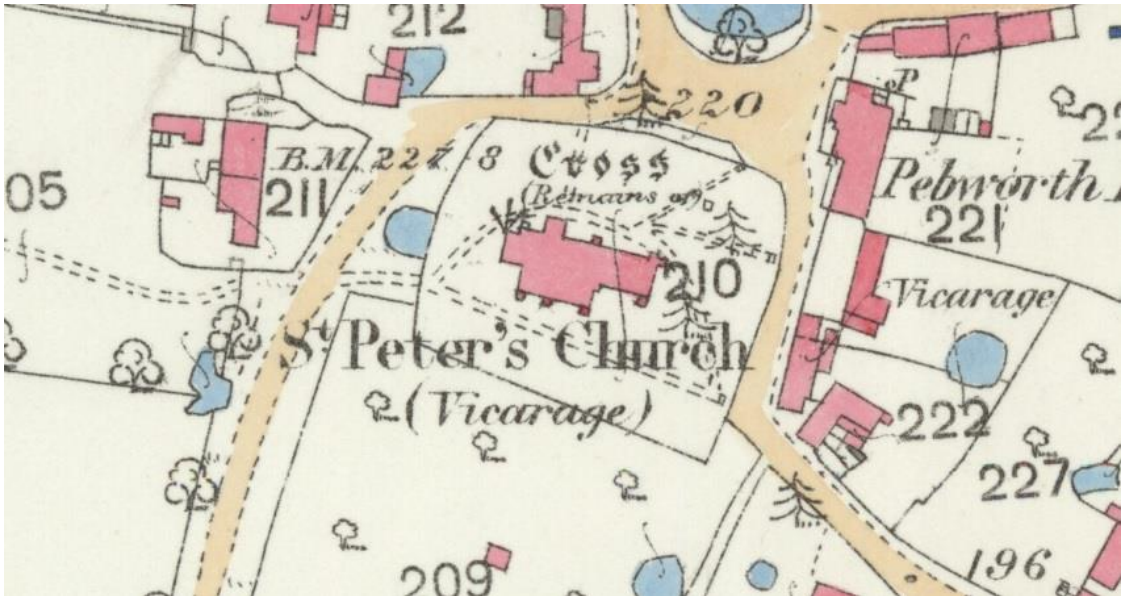


Figure 2. OS map of 1885 showing the sub-rectangular plan of the churchyard

4.0 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

As far as the author of this report is aware (and based on online information) there has been no archaeological events recorded within the curtilage of the churchyard. However, it should be noted that the watching brief did expose evidence of a building debris layer during the trenching regime, the result of a renovation episode.

4.1 Timetable for archaeological work

The watching brief was undertaken on the 18th August 2020 and was completed that day.

5.0 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

The replacement drainage system will collect rainwater run-off from the various roof gullies and transport it via a SSW drain to a soakaway drain, south of a line of lime trees. The trenching regime included the excavation of 18 linear metres of trenching (including one c. 4m spur). The linear trenching extended to a maximum depth of 0.60mm. The spur extended from the SW corner of the south aisle and met with the main trench immediately north of a brick path. At the SW terminal end of the trench a 1.5 x 1.5m soakaway drain was excavated and extended to a depth of 1m (Figure 3).

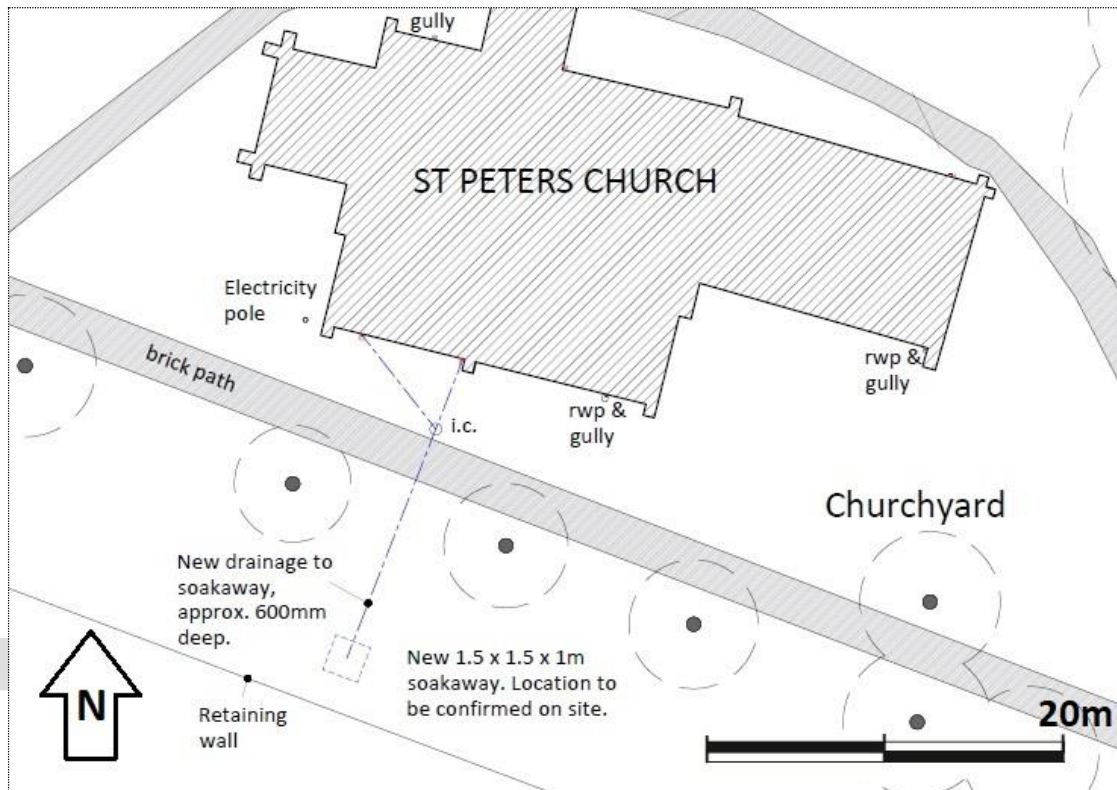


Figure 3: Plan of the proposed trenching regime

5.1 Linear Trenching and the NW spur

The linear trench extended from the elevation of the south aisle to the northern edge of the soakaway and measured c. 18m. A depth of 0.60m was maintained along the entire length of the trench (note, the trench cut into a north to south slope). The c. 6m spur running for the NW section of the south aisle joined the linear trench immediately north of the E-W churchyard brick-lined pathway.

The linear trenching and the connecting spur were positioned over two existing [cast iron] downpipes (**Plates 2 & 3**). Between the trench sections was a blocked-in door which was probably contemporary with the construction of the South Aisle (c. 15th century). The trench excavation revealed no evidence of an external threshold or any features associated with this door. Initial trenching did expose a 20th century failed ceramic drainage cowl and connecting ceramic piping; both were silted-up (**Plate 4**). The same failure was also encountered with the trench terminus of the NW spur (**Plate 5**). It was noticed that the trenching followed an existing drainage run which extended to a depth of c. 0.55m below the existing ground level. It is therefore assumed that this area of the churchyard, between the South Aisle southern elevation of the churchyard pathway had been previously disturbed by a 20th century drainage system; however both trench section north of the pathway abruptly stopped, allowing the rainwater to disperse into the surrounding soils north of the pathway (**Plate 6**). However, recovered from the NW spur was a large dressed limestone block (see **Plate 13**). The roughly cubed stone block contained a series of chamfered grooved lines that indicate a possible external masonry block.

A small trench section was excavated across the E-W churchyard pathway (**Plates 7 & 8**). The stratigraphy was identical to that found in trenching to the north of the pathway,

comprising two contexts: topsoil that overlies a [Blue Lias] Cotswold limestone derivative soil. No cultural artefacts were recovered from this section of the trenching regime.

The trajectory of the trenching from the E-W pathway to the soakaway was maintained, despite potential root system from a nearby avenue of pollarded lime trees (**Plate 9**). It was within the section between the pathway and the soakaway that a large dumping deposits was uncovered (**Plate 10**).

Surprisingly, the excavation within the linear trench section south of the E-W pathway encountered limited root action and therefore, the stratigraphy within the east and western section of the trench were well-defined (**Plates 11 & 12**).

Within this deposit were recovered a small assemblage of artefacts including 19th century ceramics, 19th century glass, undated metal objects and plaster (see **Plates 14 to 18**). The dumping deposit is probably the result of a late 19th century or early 20th century restoration event. The presence of probable internal medieval or post-medieval wall plaster suggests that the restoration event was from within the church. The ceramics and window glass recovered suggests that the date of this restoration event is within the past 150 years.

5.2 The Soakaway

The soakaway marks the southernmost extent of the trenching regime and was located c. 1m north of an E-W revetment wall. The wall marks the original boundary of the medieval churchyard. Immediately south is a recent churchyard extension (see **Plate 11**). The soakaway measured 1.5 x 1.5 m and extended to a depth of c. 1m. Two deposits were recorded within this feature. The uppermost deposit extended to a depth of 0.70m below the existing ground level and comprised of a local [Blue Lias] limestone derivative soil. Immediately below this was a natural deposit, considered to represent a B/C-horizon soil. Only one cultural artefact was recovered from the uppermost deposit – a small red brick fragment which, based on the impurities within its fabric was 18th century or earlier in date.

6.0 DISCUSSION

The parish church of St Peter in Pebworth constitutes a significant heritage asset, designated a Grade I Listed Building (LB 1081297).

The listing description claims that the church is ‘A small village church relatively untouched by C19 restoration.’ However, the watching brief did uncover deposits within the trenching, immediately south of the churchyard pathway that were clearly associated with restoration.⁵ A significant debris deposit that extended for c. 8m and present within the base included [internal] fragments of wall plaster (**Plate 14**).⁶ Found within the same deposit was a small assemblage of domestic ceramics, window glass fragments and a large dressed piece of limestone (**Plates 14 to 18**). Surprisingly absent from this deposit and within the remaining trenching to the south (including the soakaway was [disarticulated] human bone. The building debris deposit, extending from the churchyard pathway to the soakaway appears to be relatively recent and is more than likely is evidence of a localised restoration

⁵ Due to Covid-19 and the threat of sporadic vandalism and theft, access into the church was not available.

⁶ The plasterwork surfaces were examined for evidence of [medieval] paint using Decorrelation-Stretch (a desk-based colour algorithm). Unfortunately, no evidence of paint surfaces was present.

event, probably 19th century. This deposit probably extends much deeper and would have disturbed previous burials.

The soakaway, measuring 1.5 x 1.5m and extending to a depth of c. 1m below the existing ground level revealed two deposits, the upper most deposit contained several fragments of brick (of unknown date) and no human bone (**Plate 12**). Immediately below this deposit was a B/C soil horizon which was considered natural. This deposit extended from 0.7m to 1.1m below the existing ground level. No artefactual evidence derived from this deposit.

A small assemblage of human remains was retrieved from trenching that extended from the south aisle elevation to the churchyard pathway, c. 6m to the south. These remains were considered disarticulated in context, the probable result of historic disturbance from successive grave digging events. This assemblage was noted and reburied on site.

7.0 REFERENCES CONSULTED

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PLATES



Plate 1. General view of the church and churchyard, looking ENE



Plate 2. General view of the south aisle, looking north



Plate 3. Historic door and the trajectory of the linear trench marked in yellow paint, looking north



Plate 4. The northern linear trench terminus, looking north
Plate 5. The NW spur terminus, looking NNW



Plate 6. Eastern section of the eastern spur, looking east



Plate 7. Initial removal of the pathway brickwork, looking east



Plate 8. Trench section below a pathway, revealing eastern section



Plate 9. Trajectory of the linear trench, looking north



Plate 10. Northern section of the trenching regime, looking north



Plate 11. View of the linear trench, looking south towards the soakaway



Plate 12. Full excavation of the soakaway, looking north



Plate 13. Large dressed masonry stone found, within the northern section of the eastern spur trench



Plate 14. Probable medieval plaster found within the central section of the linear trench



Plate 15. Several metalwork artefacts found within the upper section of the soakaway



Plate 16. Small assemblage of ceramic sherds found within the central section of the linear trench

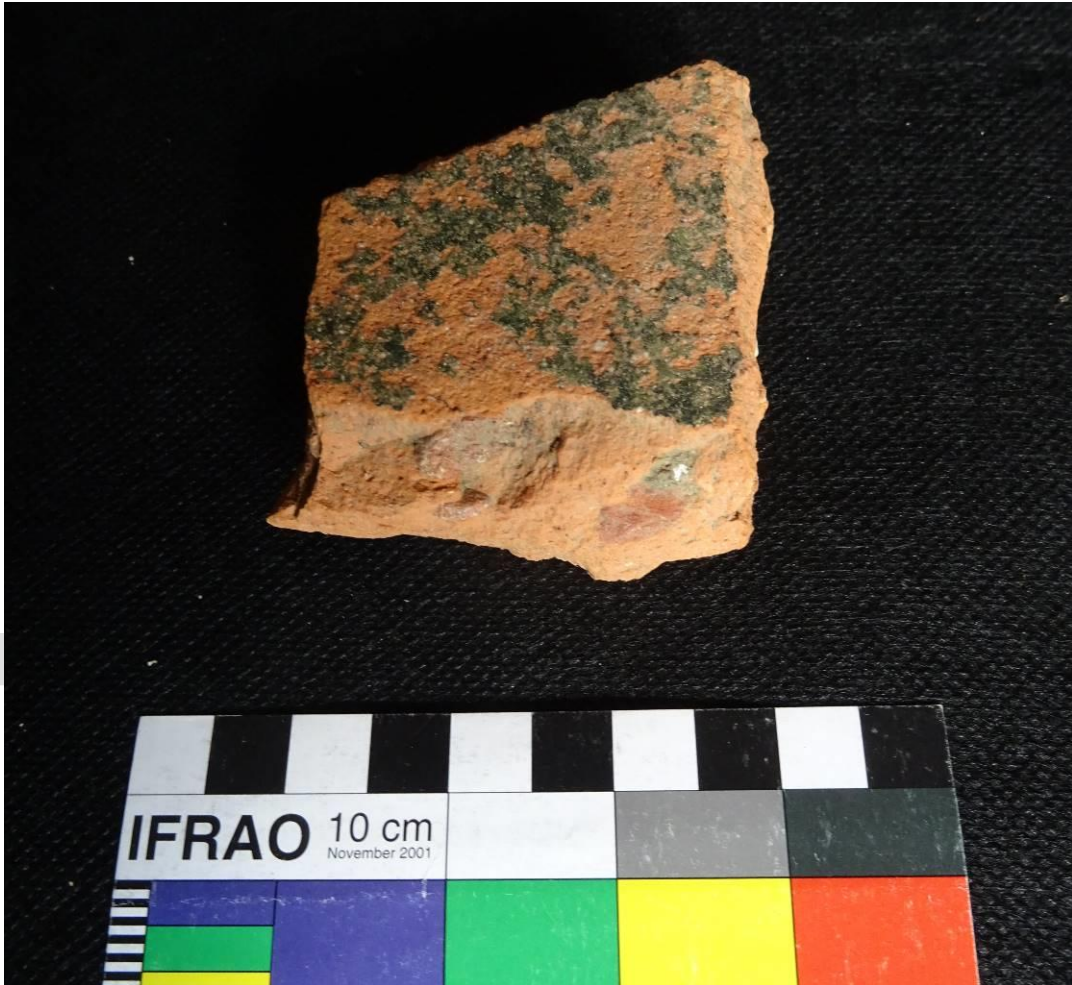


Plate 17. Post-medieval glazed ceramic, recovered from within the central section of the linear trench

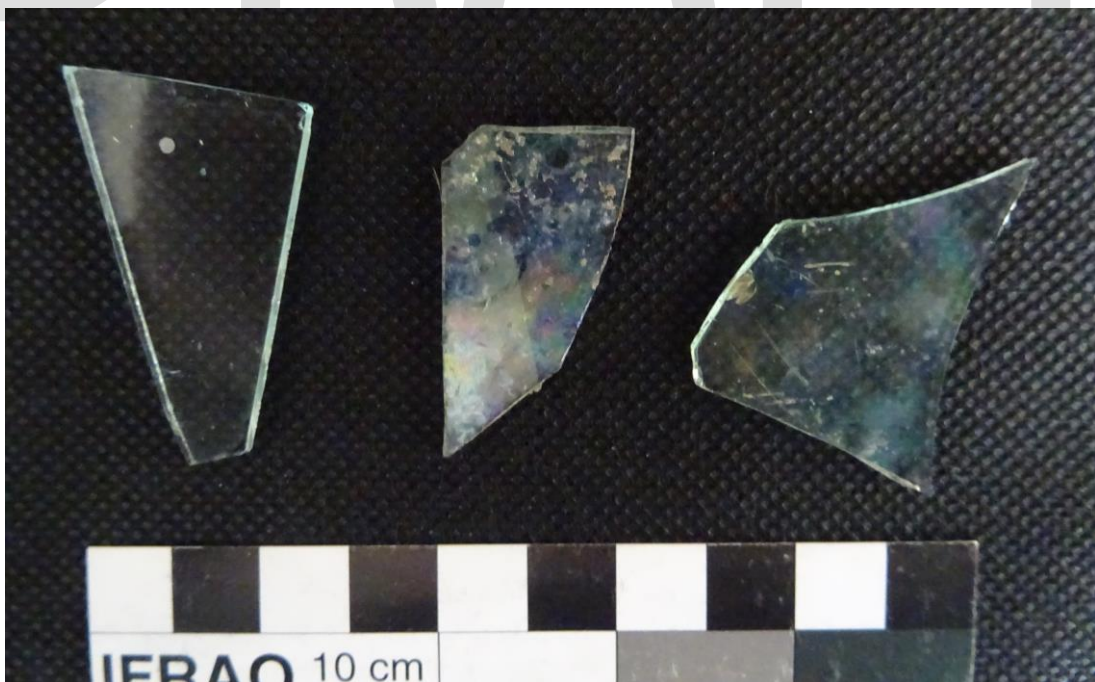


Plate 18. Glass fragments recovered within the central section of the linear trench

APPENDIX 1: Listing Description

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: I

List Entry Number: 1081297

Legacy System number: 147643

Date first listed: 30-Jul-1959

Statutory Address: Church of St Peter, Front Street, Pebworth

National Grid Reference: SP 12860 46898

Details

GV I Church C14, C15 and C16. Blue Lias stone with some Cotswold stone. Plain-tile roofs, coped gables. West tower, nave, south aisle, north porch and chancel.

Tower C14 and C15, two stage with battlements, two-light bell-openings and small angle buttresses. Deep set C15 tall west window. Nave with coved stone eaves and corner buttresses. North side one small square light, two-light Decorated window and cusped lancet. North door with pointed hollow-chamfer arch, C16 wooden door and stone gabled north porch with chamfered pointed arch.

Plastered nave roof with three C16 tie beams. Three bay Perpendicular south arcade to C16 South chapel with three-light east window, blocked door and two two-light south windows. Niche in east wall of aisle and small credence inside wall. Niche in east wall of nave and credence inside wall. Opening to former rood stair. C15 moulded chancel arch.

Chancel with three-light Perpendicular east window; north side cusped lancet, pointed arched door and Perpendicular two-light window. South side with two-light window set in blocked larger opening and C16 two-light window. Small aumbry on north side and credence/piscina on south. Some medieval glass in head of east window. Plain turned altar rails. Plastered roof with two tie beams. Jacobean pulpit. Perpendicular octagonal font.

Monuments: south aisle 1629 wall memorial Jacobean style to R Martin of Broad Marston. Chancel 1720 carved wall memorial signed E Woodward to R Martin. Various early to mid C19 marble wall monuments to members of the Shekell family by Lewis.

A small village church relatively untouched by C19 restoration. Outside the north wall of the nave is a weathered medieval stone recumbent effigy of a priest.