

Archaeological Field Unit

**St. Botolph's Church, Longthorpe, Peterborough:
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

Steve Hickling

January 2005

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 784

Commissioned by *Mr. G. C. Sayers on behalf of the Parochial Church Council*



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SUMMARY




On the 17th January 2005 the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit was called to monitor groundworks for an extension to St.Botolph's Church, Longthorpe. A stripped area for a new floor and a foundation trench were examined.

The only potentially interesting archaeological find of the watching brief was the discovery that the foundations of the chancel appeared to be of two phases. The SMR records that there was a 'Chapel belonging to Peterborough Abbey at Longthorpe c.1189' and that in 'c.1262 - 1273 old chapel taken down and rebuilt on new site at insistence of Sir William of Thorpe' (SMR01927). The fabric of the present building is thought to be 13th century, so maybe it was built on the same site, or utilised an older church building site.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	1
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	1
METHODOLOGY	6
RESULTS	7
DISCUSSION	7
CONCLUSIONS	7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
BIBLIOGRAPHY	8
LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site Location Plan	2
Figure 2 Development Area	5
LIST OF PLATES	
<i>Plate 1 Longthorpe Tower</i>	3
<i>Plate 2 St.Botolphs' Church</i>	3
<i>Plate 3 Ordnance Survey (1889) showing the church and the village</i>	4
<i>Plate 4 The foundations of the Chancel showing probably two phases</i>	6

Drawing Conventions

Sections	Plans
Limit of Excavation -----	Limit of Excavation _____
Cut _____	Deposit - Conjectured -----
Cut - Conjectured -----	Natural Features
Soil Horizon -----	Intrusion/Truncation -----
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	Sondages/Machine Strip -----
Intrusion/Truncation -----	Illustrated Section _____ S.14
Top of Natural _____	Deposit 
Top Surface _____	Excavated Slot 
Break in Section -----	Cut Number 118
Cut Number 	
Deposit Number 117	
Ordnance Datum $\frac{18.45\text{m ODN}}{\times}$	

**St. Botolph's Church, Longthorpe, Peterborough:
An Archaeological Watching Brief
TL 16319838**

1 INTRODUCTION

On the 27th January 2005, the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit conducted a Watching Brief during ground works at St. Botolph's Church, Longthorpe, Peterborough. The work was carried out at the request of Mr. G. C. Sayers on behalf of the Parochial Church Council in response to advice issued by Ben Robinson, the Peterborough City Council Archaeology Officer. The development was the construction of a new office and link between the Sacristy and the Chancel.

The site is located on Thorpe Road, in the medieval core of the village.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

According to the British Geological Survey Map (Sheet 158, Peterborough, 1:50,000), the church is situated on third river terrace gravels on the north bank of the river Nene.

The topography is flat, at a height of 18.5m O.D.

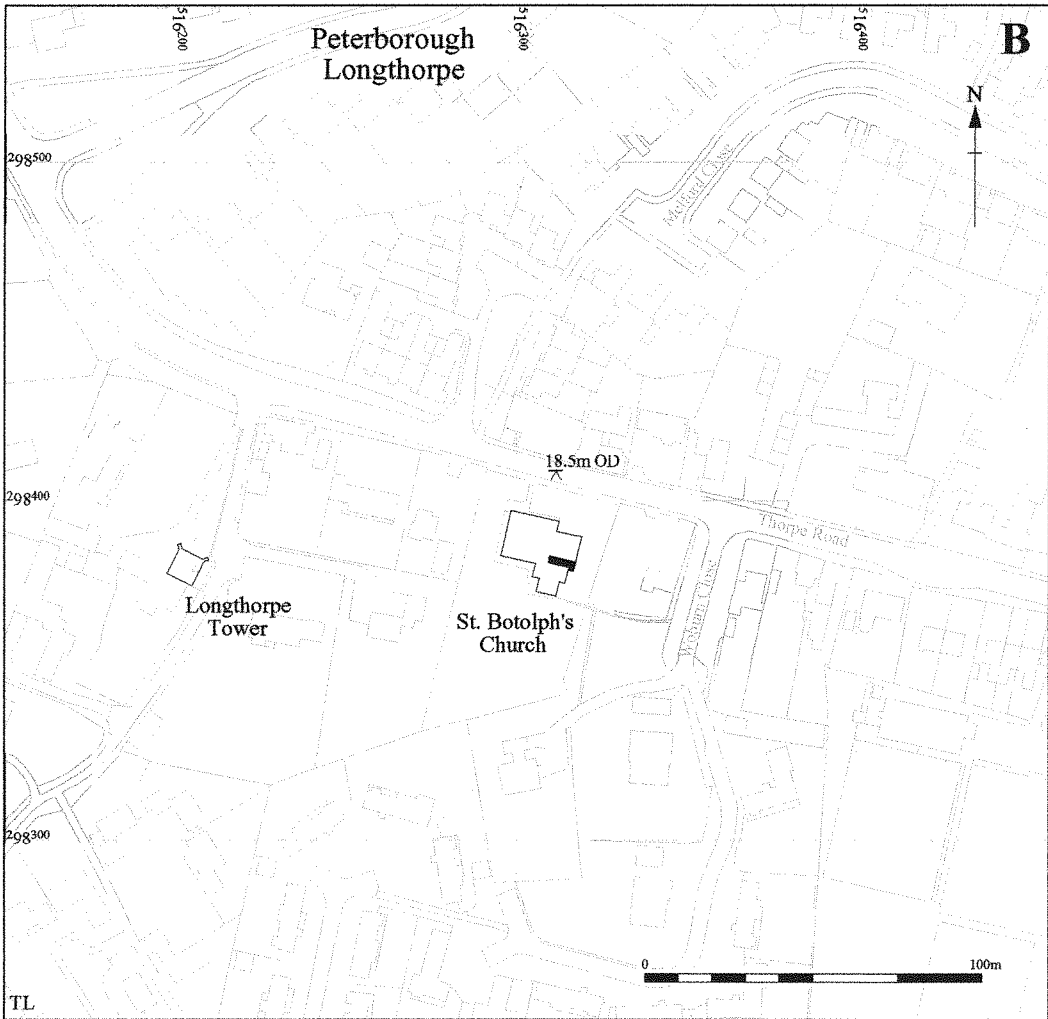
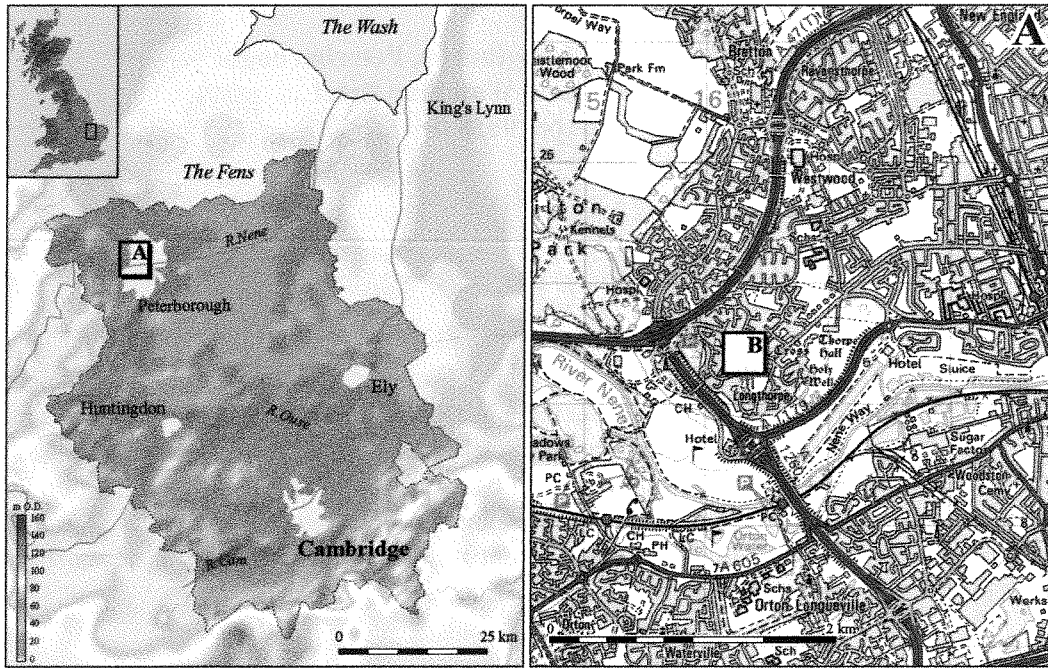
3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Neolithic

Neolithic remains are widespread on both sides of the River Nene. These occur mainly as isolated finds of flint tools (arrowheads). No settlement evidence is recorded in the area around Longthorpe.

3.2 Bronze Age

It has been suggested that there was widespread occupation of the Nene valley during the Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC). Bronze Age remains have been noted to the west of the site, on the southern bank of the River Nene. Barrows or burial mounds (dated to the Neolithic/Bronze Age period, SMR nos. 1392 and 1620) have been located on low-lying land to the north of Orton Longueville and a Bronze Age axe (SMR no. 1998) was found in the same



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Figure 1 Location of trench

area. On the northern bank of the river a Middle Bronze Age palstave is recorded (SMR no. 7844).

It would therefore appear that Bronze Age occupation in this area was concentrated close to the river in spite of the land being relatively low-lying.

3.3 Iron Age

Iron Age use of rivers from the Wash to the Fen are well attested and associated with continental Iron Age influence. Early Iron Age pottery ('Late Hallstatt' type) has been found in abundance near Peterborough (Kenny 2003).

An Iron Age farm has been recorded close to the Roman fort at Longthorpe and Iron Age coins have been found on the northern bank of the River Nene (SMR nos. 10479 and 10478).

3.4 Roman

Extensive Roman remains have been found in the Nene Valley and the well documented fort of Longthorpe (Scheduled Ancient Monument 135) with an associated Iron Age farm lies less than 1km to the west of the site. Roman occupation remains have also been found just south of the river. A fording place (SMR no. 4321) is known adjacent to the fort. A wealth of Roman occupation remains (SMR 01383), pottery kilns (SMR 01435c) and a cemetery (SMR 01386) have been found outside the fort as well as numerous surface finds.

3.5 Anglo-Saxon

Possible Anglo-Saxon cross fragments still lay 300m to the east, reused as stocks and a whipping post (SMR 01657). Late Saxon building remains have been found cut by the fishponds 600m to the east (SMR 04454a). An Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found within Longthorpe fort (SMR 1382).

3.6 Medieval

The parish church of St. Botolph (SMR 01927) dates to the 13th century and was a chapel of ease until 1850 when Longthorpe became a separate parish. Documents suggest that there was an earlier church on the site. Longthorpe Tower, 150m to the west, (SMR 01709) is a medieval building of the 13th century with a fortified 'tower'. Medieval fishponds are visible 0.7km to the east (SMR 01649) near the Holy Well spring. 200m to the north-west lies the socket of a medieval cross (SMR 01662), while 1km to the east lie medieval cultivation remains (SMR 08283).

A watching brief was carried out at Longthorpe Green in 2004, but no archaeological features were observed (Kenney 2004).



Plate 1 Longthorpe Tower Plate 2 St. Botolph's Church

The Deserted Medieval Village of Botolph Bridge (also known as Bottlebridge or Botuleuesbrige) has been located immediately to the south (SMR no. 1805). It is known that Botolph Bridge was an embargement point on the Nene for the transport of stone from quarries beyond Alwalton along the fen waterways to towns such as Cambridge. Excavations here in 1999 and 2000 by the AFU revealed substantial medieval settlement remains (Kemp and Spoerry 2001).

During the medieval period nearby Peterborough was a major town with dense medieval occupation to the north of the river. Activity was initially centred around the monastic settlement and market but grew considerably during the medieval period.

3.7 Post-Medieval

600m to the east of the site lies the Holy Well, a natural spring encased in an 18th century grotto (SMR 04454). Its presence may have led to the development of Thorpe Manor and its earthworks which surround the spring.

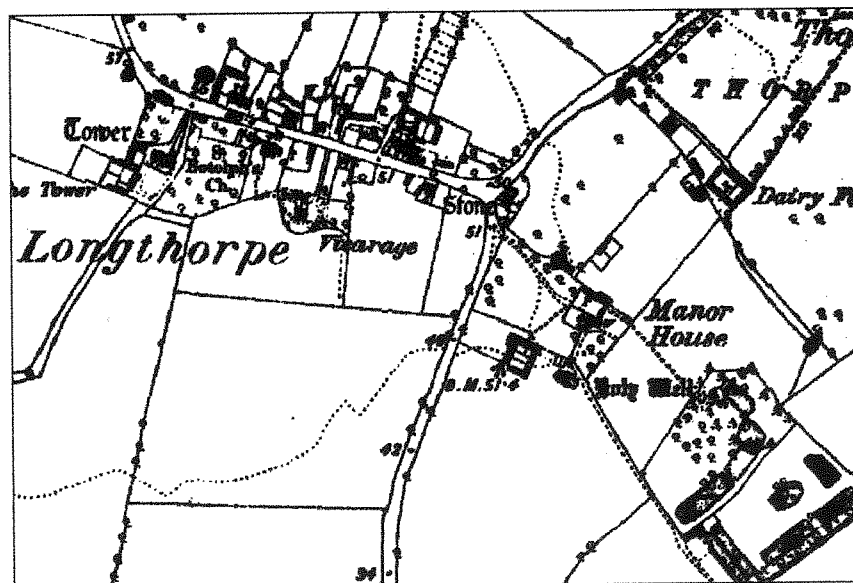


Plate 3 Ordnance Survey (1889) showing the church and the village

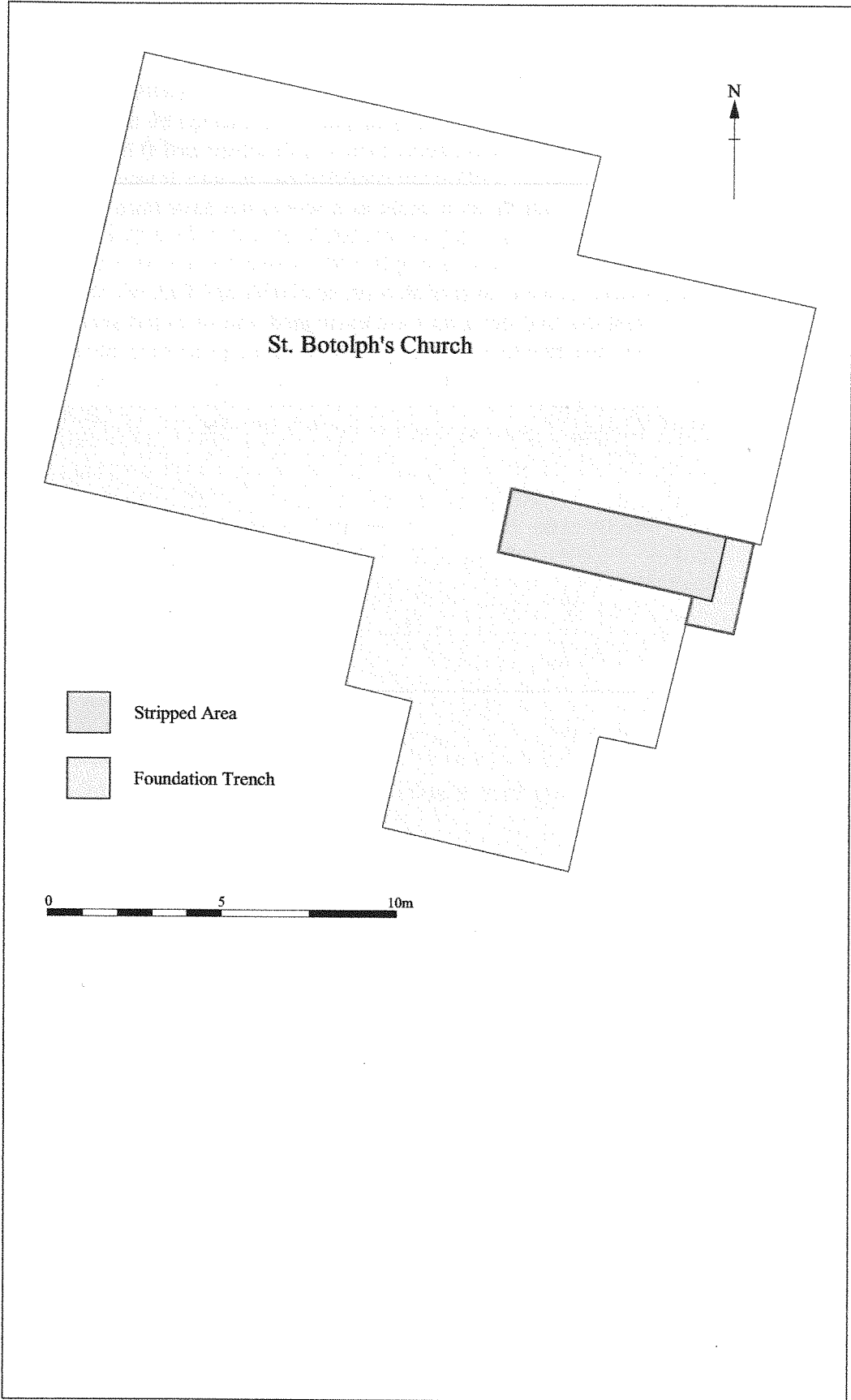


Figure 2 Development area

4 METHODOLOGY

The site was inspected after the floor area had been lowered by the removal of c.0.3m of topsoil and the foundation trench, 1.2m deep and 0.6m wide, had been dug by a minidigger. Following consultations on site, it was decided not to examine the trench for the new drain as it would not have been dug deeper than the topsoil layer.

The exposed surfaces were cleaned in order to clarify any features or deposits. All exposed features and deposits were excavated and recorded according to AFU standards and practises. Digital and standard print/slide photographs were taken.



Plate 4 The foundations of the Chancel showing probably two phases

5 RESULTS

The greater part of the site was composed of the floor area, which had been lowered, but only halfway through the topsoil. No archaeological features were visible at this level.

The foundation trench had been dug to a depth of approximately 1.2m, revealing 0.45m of topsoil resting on top of a mixed backfill deposit probably representing continuous grave digging activity. No archaeological features were visible. The northern edge of this trench butted against the south wall of the chancel. As shown in plate 4, the present chancel foundations (13th century) appear to rest on a wider, earlier foundation composed of a large blocks of dressed stone resting on rubble.

6 DISCUSSION

The only potentially interesting archaeological find of the watching brief was the discovery that the foundations of the chancel appeared to be of two phases. The SMR records that there was a, 'Chapel belonging to Peterborough Abbey at Longthorpe c.1189.' and that in, 'c.1262 - 1273 old chapel taken down and rebuilt on new site at insistence of Sir William of Thorpe.' (SMR01927). The fabric of the present building is thought to be 13th century, so maybe it was built on the same site, not a new site. Alternatively, what is interpreted as two phases in the make-up of the foundations, may just be one phase, but in an unusual style

7 CONCLUSION

Although no cut archaeological features were discovered in this project, light has been shed on the development of the church building, in that there may have been a church on the site before the present church was built in the late 13th century. The documentary sources say that the church was rebuilt on a new site in the 13th century, but this may need to be revised.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Mr. G. C. Sayers who commissioned and funded the archaeological work on behalf of the Diocese of Peterborough. The project was managed by Judith Roberts. Thanks must go to Crane Begg for providing the illustrations.

Advice for archaeological work was given by Ben Robinson, Peterborough City Council Archaeology Office.

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Watching Brief CCCAFU report **711**

British Geological Survey
Map Sheet 158, Peterborough, 1:50,000

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