

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
at St Leonard's Tower, West Malling, Kent**

NGR: 567606 157081



By Gary Webster

October 2016



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**ASE Project No: 160644
Site Code: WML16**

**ASE Report No: 2016367
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With contributions by
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Abstract

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Archaeology South-East at St Leonards Tower, West Malling, Kent, ME19 6PD between the 24th and 26th August 2016. The fieldwork was commissioned by English Heritage in advance of the replacement of fencing.

Thirty-seven postholes were monitored. There were no archaeologically significant finds, features, or deposits identified. Several pieces of late 19th and 20th century CBM were recovered. All of the excavated material had been previously disturbed.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University College London, were commissioned by English Heritage (hereafter 'the client') to undertake an archaeological watching brief at St Leonards Tower, West Malling, Kent, ME19 6PD (hereafter referred to as 'the site'), during the replacement of a modern stock boundary fence. The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 567606 157081.

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 St Leonards tower consists of a Norman Keep, 21m tall, and 9.8m square. It is set within a patch of grassland sloping east towards St Leonard's Street, c1225 m square. A wall runs along the north and the east of the site. The south and west is bordered by the fence, which was the subject of the works.
- 1.2.2 The town of West Malling lies to the North, and Kings Hill to the south. East Malling lies further east and Offham is to the west. St Leonards Street lies on a northeast-southwest alignment directly to the east of the site.
- 1.2.3 According to the latest data from the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology of the site comprises the Hythe Formation –Sandstone and Limestone (BGS 2016). Superficial Head deposits are listed to the east and south of the site.

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Heritage List for England no. 1013382).
- 1.3.2 English heritage is replacing a boundary fence along the south and east of St Leonard's Tower. Due to the archaeologically sensitive nature of the site, English Heritage decided that an Archaeological Watching Brief was appropriate.
- 1.3.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by English Heritage (2016) outlining the work to be done and the methodology to be employed. This was provided to Archaeology South East prior to the commencement of groundworks. A copy of this was available during the course of the watching brief.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The WSI lists the aim as being "...to preserve by record the presence and nature of archaeological deposits encountered during the works, and to signal to interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, the discovery of archaeological material for which the resources allocated to the watching brief are not sufficient to support treatment to a proper and satisfactory standard."

1.5 Scope of Report

- 1.5.1 This report details the results of the archaeological watching brief that was carried out by Gary Webster (Archaeologist) between the 24th and 26th August 2016. The project was managed by Neil Griffin (Project Manager) and Jim Stevenson (Post Excavation Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The following background information is taken from the WSI produced by English Heritage (2016) with due acknowledgement.
- 2.2 St. Leonard's Tower is located to the south of West Malling and stands at the west end of a narrow strip of land. The tower, which is square in plan, is constructed from coursed Kentish ragstone rubble, with tufa ashlar dressings. Herringbone work is visible in the lowest stage. There are clasping buttresses at the corners and a central pilaster buttress on the south face. The northwest buttress contains a staircase rising through the height of the building. The tower has three stages marked by two off-sets; the lowest offset is marked by a tufa string course. There is a row of four arched blind panels on the east and south faces. The windows have round-headed arches. The original entrance was in the east wall but was subsequently blocked. The existing entrance is through a doorway formed in the west wall adjacent to the northwest buttress.
- 2.3 Internally the tower is roofless and all floors have been lost. Evidence for their location survives in the form of joist sockets. These suggest that in its original form the tower had two floors rather than the three which might have been expected from the off-sets of the external elevations. There are no mural fireplaces. The staircase contained within the northwest buttress is constructed in tufa.
- 2.4 The form and character of St. Leonard's Tower, particularly the use of herringbone, clasping buttresses and unsophisticated architectural expression, suggest a construction date soon after the Norman conquest. From 1066-1076 the land at West Malling was in the possession of William I's half-brother, Odo, bishop of Bayeux but was restored to the bishops of Rochester thereafter. Gundulf of Bec was bishop of Rochester from 1076 to 1108, and he has been traditionally regarded as the builder of St. Leonard's Tower. In fact on the current evidence it is impossible to be this precise but a construction date early in Gundulf's episcopacy is certainly possible and made all the more probable by his foundation of a Benedictine convent at West Malling. Gundulf was a notable builder, responsible for overseeing the works on the White Tower, and the probable association of St. Leonard's Tower with him is of exceptional historical value.
- 2.5 As a well-preserved early-Norman tower, the building is of exceptional historical and evidential value but very little is understood of the history and archaeological potential of its immediate setting. It is apparently named after an adjacent church or chapel first mentioned in c.1120 – 1130, which was demolished in the 18th century (before 1788). The chapel stood to the east of the tower, and the existing wall on the northern boundary incorporates material from the chapel's north wall. The absence of fireplaces and garderobes within the tower make regular residential use seem unlikely and this fact, together with the possible use of the tower as an administrative centre for the episcopal estate, makes certain the existence of associated buildings, now lost.
- 2.6 The south and west property boundaries along which the modern post and rail fence runs do not respect medieval boundaries and may cut through the footprint of buildings. Given the extremely poor state of knowledge of the

historical use of these areas the ground in which the posts are set may contain important evidence for medieval and post-medieval uses of the monument. This evidential value will have been locally eroded by the ground disturbance associated with the introduction of the existing fence.

2.7 *Potential Impact of the Works on Evidential Value*

The fence running along the south and west boundaries will be replaced on a like-for-like basis. This work requires intervention into the scheduled ancient monument that carries a risk of harm to significance. Ground disturbance associated with the introduction of the fencing will have eroded the archaeological potential of areas immediately affected by fence posts but there remains potential for unstratified deposits to survive below ground in these locations and potential for disturbance of unstratified deposits when the posts are removed. Given the current poor state of knowledge regarding the historical uses of the land adjacent to the tower any archaeological deposits or finds encountered during the works have the potential to inform understanding of the monument.

2.8 No archaeological record exists for the installation of the existing fence.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 The fieldwork involved the replacement of fencing posts within their existing postholes. The remains of the posts and surrounding concrete were removed by hand excavation. This work was carried out by fencing contractors and monitored by a qualified archaeologist.
- 3.1.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the WSI (English Heritage 2016).
- 3.1.3 The positions of the most postholes were surveyed using a GPS and can therefore be tied into the Ordnance Survey.
- 3.1.4 All deposits were recorded on standard ASE recording sheets and a photographic record was maintained throughout the work

3.2 Fieldwork Constraints

- 3.2.1 Due to the overgrown nature of the site it was not possible to get accurate survey data on every posthole. Where necessary, measurements were extrapolated from surveyed postholes to locate neighbouring ones.

3.3 The Site Archive

- 3.3.1 ASE informed the local museum prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated. The site archive, quantified below (Tables 1 and 2). is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited in due course.

Number of Contexts	3
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	0
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	117
Permatrace sheets	0
Trench Record Forms	0

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

Bulk finds (quantity e.g. 1 bag, 1 box, 0.5 box 0.5 of a box)	1 bag
Registered finds (number of)	0
Flots and environmental remains from bulk samples	0
Palaeoenvironmental specialists sample samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides)	0
Waterlogged wood	0
Wet sieved environmental remains from bulk samples	0

Table 2: Quantification of artefact and environmental samples

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 All postholes were excavated with a diameter of approximately 0.25m and a maximum depth of approximately 0.85m. Due to the homogeneous nature of the backfill within all the postholes, a single context number was allocated to the same context in all of them. In other words backfill was recorded as [001] in all postholes. There were no significant variations that warranted a deviation from this methodology.

4.2 Thirty-seven postholes monitored on between 23 - 26/08/16

Context	Type	Interpretation	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
001	Layer	Backfill	-	-	0.6-0.85
002	Layer	Topsoil	-	-	c.0.1
003	Deposit	Natural			-

Table 3: List of recorded contexts

- 4.2.1 The postholes were all filled with backfill deposit [001], which was a mid-greyish brown mix of topsoil and subsoil and contained fragments of Ceramic Building Material (CBM).
- 4.2.2 The natural geology [003] was seen in the sides and bases of some of the postholes, overlain by topsoil [002]. No subsoil was identified.
- 4.2.3 No archaeological deposits or features were identified.

5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the watching brief on replacement fencing at St Leonards Castle. All finds were washed and dried or air dried as appropriate. They were subsequently quantified by count and weight and were bagged by material and context (Table 4). All finds have been packed and stored following ClfA guidelines (2014). No further conservation is required

Posthole	Pottery	Weight (g)	CBM	Weight (g)	Stone	Weight (g)
1			3	246	2	7803
4			3	49		
5			2	10		
18			1	66		
20	1	8				
23			3	2075		
26			1	114		
27	1	36				
34			1	113		
35			1	112		
Total	2	42	15	3187	2	7803

Table 4: Finds quantification

5.2 The Post-Roman Pottery by Luke Barber

- 5.2.1 Just two sherds of pottery were recovered during the archaeological work, both of late post-medieval date. The backfill of posthole [001] produced a fresh 8g sherd of transfer-printed pearlware plate with Chinese design. A date between c. 1790 and 1820 is probable for this vessel.
- 5.2.2 Posthole 27 [001] produced a 36g base sherd from a refined whiteware preserve jar. The sherd, which has close-set vertical ribbing, is a Maling (Newcastle) product and is somewhat worn. The vessel is best placed between c. 1875 and 1925.

5.3 The ceramic building material by Isa Benedetti-Whitton

- 5.3.1 Fifteen pieces of ceramic building material weighing 3187g were collected from the backfill of eight postholes. All the brick was in the same fabric (B1) and the more complete fragments revealed a fairly large brick, even in form and with a shallow semi-circular frog. Traces of cement are indicative of a later 19th century or early 20th century date. Two tile fabrics were identified, T1 and T2 (see Table 5). The roof tile pieces were all very fragmentary and could not be dated, but are likely to be coeval with the brick.

Fabric	Description
T1	Dense, well-fired red-orange fabric with sparse iron-rich inclusions up to 1mm; sparse calcareous material.
T2	Hard-fired red fabric with common calcareous speckle up to 1mm.
B1	Evenly fired red brick; sparse quartz and calcareous material, otherwise inclusion free.

Table 5: CBM fabric descriptions

5.4 The Geological Material by Luke Barber

- 5.4.1 Posthole 1 [001] produced a 14g fragment of worn Lower Greensand chert that could easily occur naturally on site. It also produced a 7789g block of a somewhat hard cherty mid grey Kentish Ragstone. Although the piece shows no obvious sign of facing it is almost certainly a rubble building block from one of the many quarries working the Ragstone along the Medway valley.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The watching brief successfully monitored the replacement of 37 posts for a new fence. As the posts were placed within existing postholes, the only ground that was disturbed during the work had been previously disturbed by the initial installation of the postholes.
- 6.2 There were no significant archaeological finds, features or deposits identified during this watching brief.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey (BGS) 2016 *Geology of Britain viewer*
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

ClfA 2014. Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials

English Heritage 2016. *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological supervision and recording of ground works under watching brief. St Leonard's Tower, West Malling, Kent*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank English Heritage for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project.

HER Summary Form

Site Code	WML 16					
Identification Name and Address	St Leonards Tower, West Malling, Kent, ME19 6PD					
County, District &/or Borough	Tonbridge and West Malling					
OS Grid Refs.	567606 157081					
Geology	Hythe Formation					
Arch. South-East Project Number	160644					
Type of Fieldwork			Watching Brief			
Type of Site	Green Field					
Dates of Fieldwork	24 th August – 26 th August 2016					
Sponsor/Client	English Heritage					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Gary Webster					
Period Summary	None					
<p>Summary</p> <p>This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Archaeology South-East at St Leonards Tower, West Malling, Kent, ME19 6PD between the 24th and 26th August 2016. The fieldwork was commissioned by English Heritage in advance of the replacement of fencing.</p> <p>Thirty-seven postholes were monitored. There were no archaeologically significant finds, features, or deposits identified. Several pieces of late 19th and 20th century CBM were recovered. All of the excavated material had been previously disturbed</p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-263572

Project details

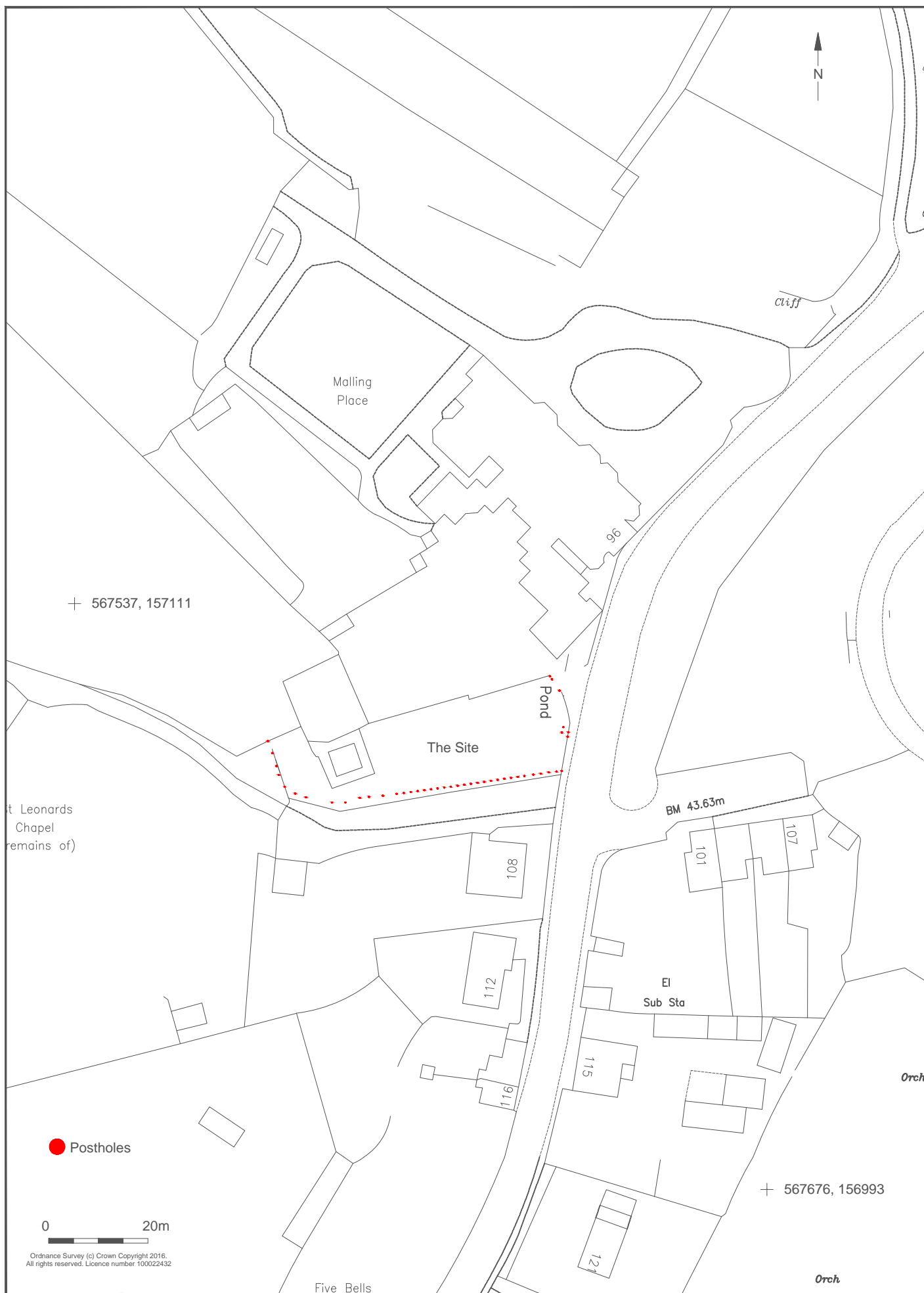
Project name	An archaeological watching brief at St Leonards Tower, West Malling, Kent
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Archaeology South-East at St Leonards Tower, West Malling, Kent, ME19 6PD between the 24th and 26th August 2016. The fieldwork was commissioned by English Heritage in advance of the replacement of fencing. Thirty-seven postholes were monitored. There were no archaeologically significant finds, features, or deposits identified. Several pieces of late 19th and 20th Century CBM and brick were identified. Almost all of the material that was removed was previously disturbed.
Project dates	Start: 24-08-2016 End: 26-08-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	WML16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 8 - Land dedicated to the display of a monument
Monument type	TOWER Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	KENT TONBRIDGE AND MALLING WEST MALLING St Leonards Tower, West Malling
Postcode	ME19 6PD
Study area	1225 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 567606 157081 50.918931402159 0.2304716649 50 55 08 N 000 13 49 E Point
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	English Heritage
Project design originator	English Heritage

Project
director/manager Neil Griffin

Type of
sponsor/funding
body English Heritage



© Archaeology South-East		St Leonards Tower, West Malling	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 160644	Oct 2016	Site location	
Report Ref: 2016367	Drawn by: AR		



© Archaeology South-East		St Leonards Tower, West Malling	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 160644	Oct 2016	Postholes location	
Report Ref: 2016367	Drawn by: AR		



Posthole 1, looking north



Posthole 18, looking south



New fence in south-west corner, looking west



New fence, looking north west

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