



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**AT**

**ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, HILLESDEN,**

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**(NGR SP 68570 28755)**

*On behalf of*

*PCC All Saints Hillesden*

**APRIL 2016**

**REPORT FOR** PCC All Saints Hillesden  
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services were appointed by Montgomery Architects on behalf of PCC All Saints Hillesden to record and exhume three inhumations revealed during the excavation of service and soakaway trenches at All Saints' Church, Hillesden, Buckinghamshire. In addition, the foundations of the churches west tower, graveyard soils and three probable graves (unexcavated as below impact) were recorded.*

*The archaeological works was conducted on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016.*

*The three exhumed inhumations were re-interred under the supervision of the Revd Rosamund Roberts below the floor of the church's west tower.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location and Geology (Fig. 1)**

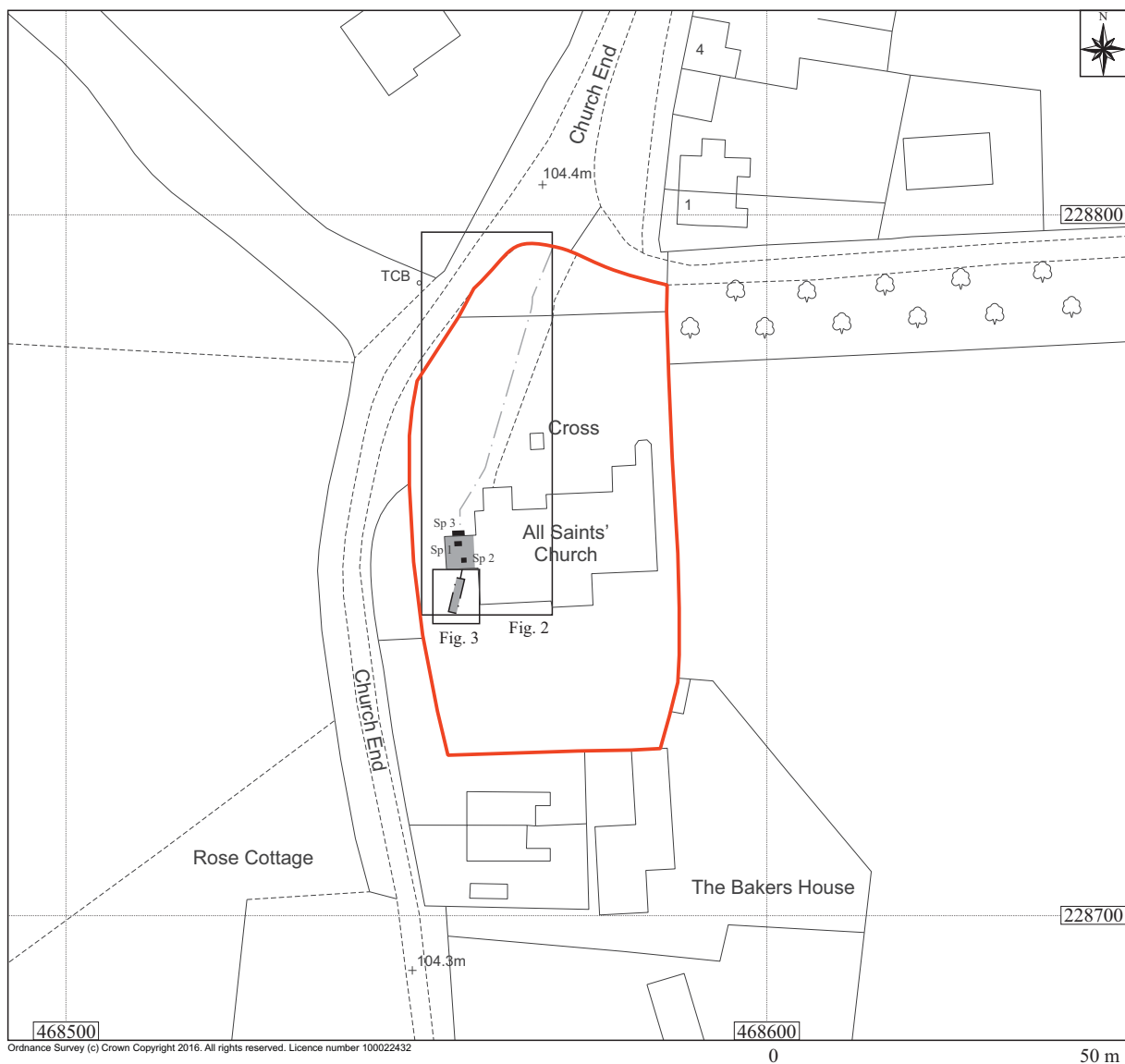
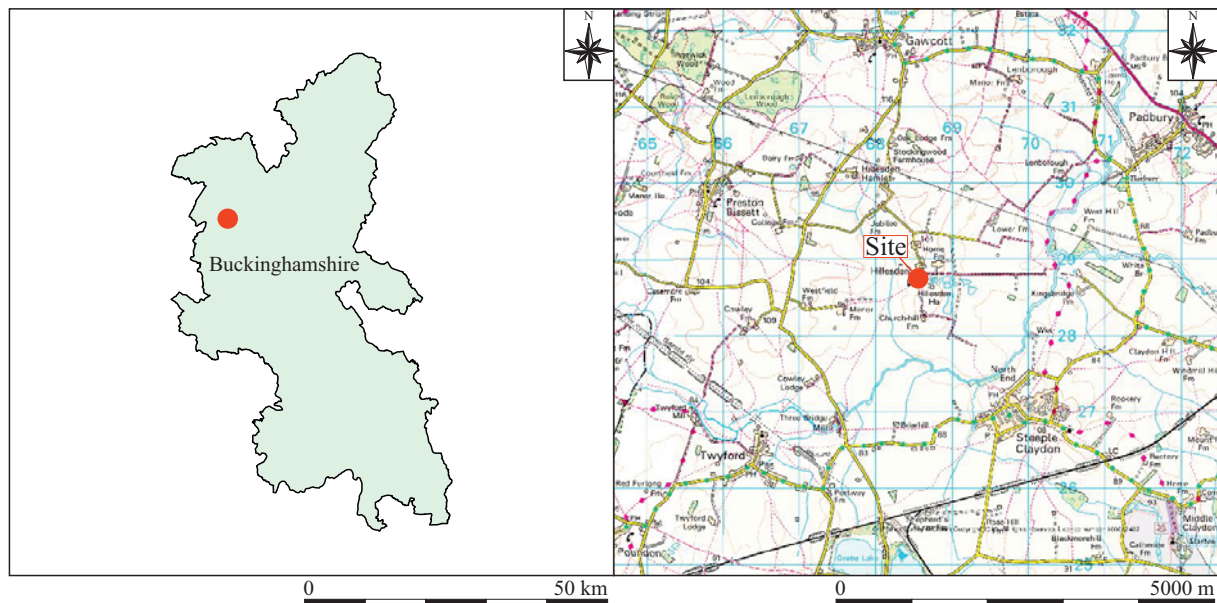
The development site is located at All Saints Church, Hillesden, Buckinghamshire, MK18 4DB (SP 68570 28755). The site lies at approximately 106.13m AOD. The British Geological Survey (online viewer) identifies the underlying geology as Mid Pleistocene Till.

### **1.2 Historical and Archaeological Background**

Land at Hillesden is first mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon charter of 949. In 1086 it was part of the lands of Walter Giffard, first Earl of Buckingham. It was then held by Walter Giffard, second earl, who died in 1164, and whose inheritance was divided in 1191 between William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, and Richard de Clare, Earl of Hertford, the over lordship of Hillesden. After the death of Gilbert de Clare in 1314 it is passed to his sister Margaret, wife of Hugh Audley, and so passed through heiresses to the Earls of Stafford. It was held by Humphrey Earl of Stafford and Duke of Buckingham in 1460, but is not afterwards mentioned (VCH 1972, 173-180).

Walter Giffard's tenant in 1086 was Hugh, probably Hugh de Bolebec, who held of Walter elsewhere in the county. Walter de Bolebec held Hillesden in the reign of Henry II. His daughter inherited Hillesden. The fourth earl sub-letted it towards the middle of the 13th century, but a mesne lordship here continued to be held by the Earls of Oxford, and is last mentioned in 1584 (VCH 1972, 173-180).

Hugh de Vere, the fourth earl, granted the manor to his daughter Isabel on her marriage with John de Courtenay of Okehampton. He had inherited Waddesdon Manor (q.v.), with which Hillesden descended for nearly 300 years. It was bestowed in dower to Isabel in 1274, and was later held by her second husband, Oliver de Dinham. Eleanor, the next dowager countess, held Hillesden in 1316. It formed part of the portion of Anne, widow of Hugh Earl of Devon, reverting at her death in 1441 to their son Thomas Earl of Devon. It was granted by Edward IV in 1462 to Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers, but was afterwards restored like Waddesdon to the Earls of Devon. Hillesden is granted by Edward VI in 1547 to Thomas Denton and Margaret



Key  Site boundary  Monitored area  Service pit

Figure 1: Site location

his wife and their heirs.

The capital message of the manor is first mentioned in 1274, and is invariably included in all extents of the manor as given in inquisitions down to the 16th century. In 1555 the dean and chapter granted an eighty year lease of the parsonage and mansion-house to Roger Giffard, whose efforts to sublet the property led to considerable litigation. The tithes were afterwards held on lease by the Denton's (VCH 1972, 173-180).

The church of All Saints is of the style of the late 15th century, having been rebuilt, with the exception of the tower, shortly after 1493. The church which it replaced was probably a 12th-century cruciform building, and fragments of the west walls of its transepts are perhaps incorporated in the short west walls of the existing transepts. Prior to the entire rebuilding, the still surviving west tower, which is of mid-15th-century date, appears to have been added or reconstructed. In the last century a thorough restoration, completed in 1875, was carried out by Sir Gilbert Scott.

The church is described by Pevsner (1994), as an uncommonly lavish, entirely perpendicular church. A visitation in 1493 noted that church was in a very poor state, apparently prompting the impropiators, Notley Abbey, to instigate rebuilding. It is doubted that the rebuilding was total due to the extra thickness of the transept walls, which is suggested to preserve the remains of the 12<sup>th</sup> century transept walls.

## **2 STRATEGY**

### **2.1 Objectives**

The objectives of the watching brief as stated in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, were:

- to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potential disruptive works
- to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

### **2.2 Methodology**

The archaeological works included inspection of the service trench to the north of the church (Fig. 2), and monitoring of the machine excavation (Plate. 1) of the final 5m. The inspection of the Trench Arch System trench to the south of the church and monitoring of the machine excavation of the final 2m was carried out. The recording of three service pits - two within the church tower, against the north and south walls, one against the external north tower wall was also conducted.

The archeological works were carried out in accordance to an order (Petion No 1005) issued by the Deputy Registra of the Diocese dated, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

The archaeological works were overseen by the Revd Rosamund Roberts.

Each inhumation was hand drawn at a scale of 1:20, a pro forma skeletal record sheet was completed and a photographic record made. The remains were not analysed by an osteoarchaeologist, although some photographs of the remains were reviewed by Sharon Clough (Osteoarchaeologist) for comment. Each inhumation was given a unique identifier, bagged individually and place within a suitable container.

The remains were reburied by the Revd Rosamund Mair Roberts beneath the floor of the church's west tower.

### 3 RESULTS

#### *Introduction*

Four inhumations (1, 16, 19 and 20) and two probable graves (4 and 23) were recorded within the Trench Arch System trench to the south of the tower. The elevations of the foundations for the north wall of the tower were recorded internally (14) and externally (15). The external elevation of the south wall was also recorded (18). Three deposits (8, 9 and 17) were recorded within the service trench on the north side of the church.

#### *Service Trench (north side of church)*

The service trench (Fig. 2) was excavated from the north side of the church's west tower to the churchyard gate (Plate. 1). It was 0.7m wide, 0.7m deep. The majority of the trench was excavated parallel to the current church path. The geological horizon (9) was observed at a general depth of 0.5m, and comprised mid brown clay silt with few stone inclusions (Fig. 2, Sect. 4).

Directly overlying the geological horizon (9) was a layer of loose, mid brown silty loam (17). This appeared to represent a re-deposited topsoil, likely to have derived from the removal of topsoil during laying of the current tarmac path. This was overlain by the turf and topsoil (8).

It was noted (from what was observed) that there was no evidence for burials, nor was any disarticulated human bone noted within the trench sections or upcast spoil. This would imply the path is well established and respected by burials since the establishment of the graveyard on the north side of the church.

#### *Trench Arch System Trench (south side of church)*

The Trench Arch System trench (Fig. 3) was 6.6m long, c. 0.6m deep at the north end (105.77m AOD), and c. 1.1m deep at the south end (105.69m AOD). The topography immediately south of the tower was generally flat at c. 106.28, rising relatively sharply c. 6m south of the tower to 106.58m AOD.

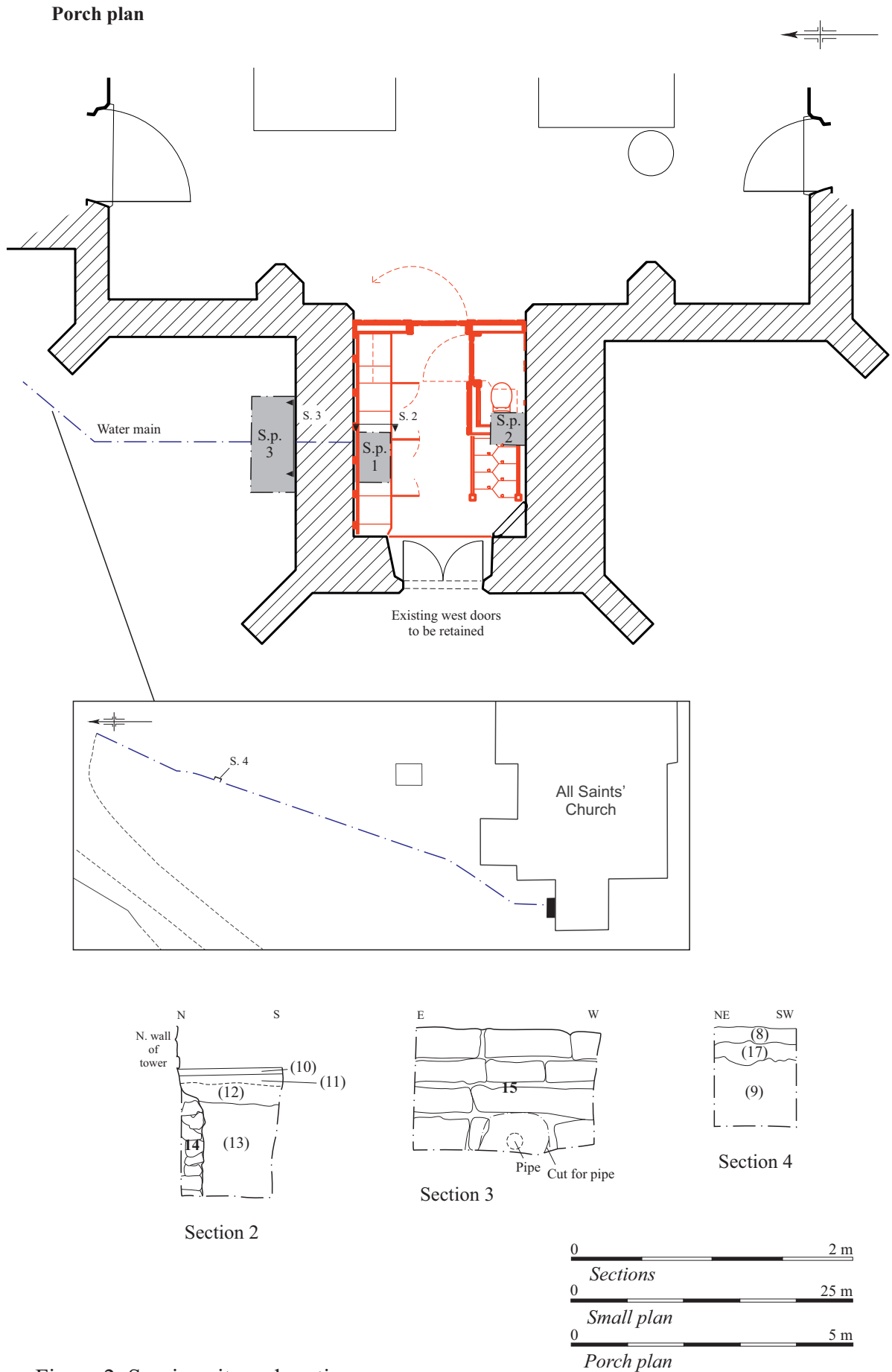


Figure 2: Service pits and sections



*Plate 1. Service trench under excavation. View to north.*

The geological horizon was not observed within the trench. The lowest deposit (6) was observed at c. 0.8m (105.56m AOD) below the current ground surface. The deposit comprised moderately compact mid-dark brown clay silt (6), with up to 10% small stones and 2% small fragmented human bone. This deposit appeared to be a general layer of soil representing the undifferentiated backfills of intercutting burials. Four burials were recorded (SK1, SK16, SK19, SK20) either cut into or within this deposit (see below). Two probable graves (4 and 23) also cut into this deposit, although not investigated.

Overlaying the general burial horizon (6) was a deposit (c. 0.5m (north end) – c. 1m thick (south) comprising mod compact, mid brown clay silt (7) with 10% small stones and 7% small fragmented human bone (charnel).

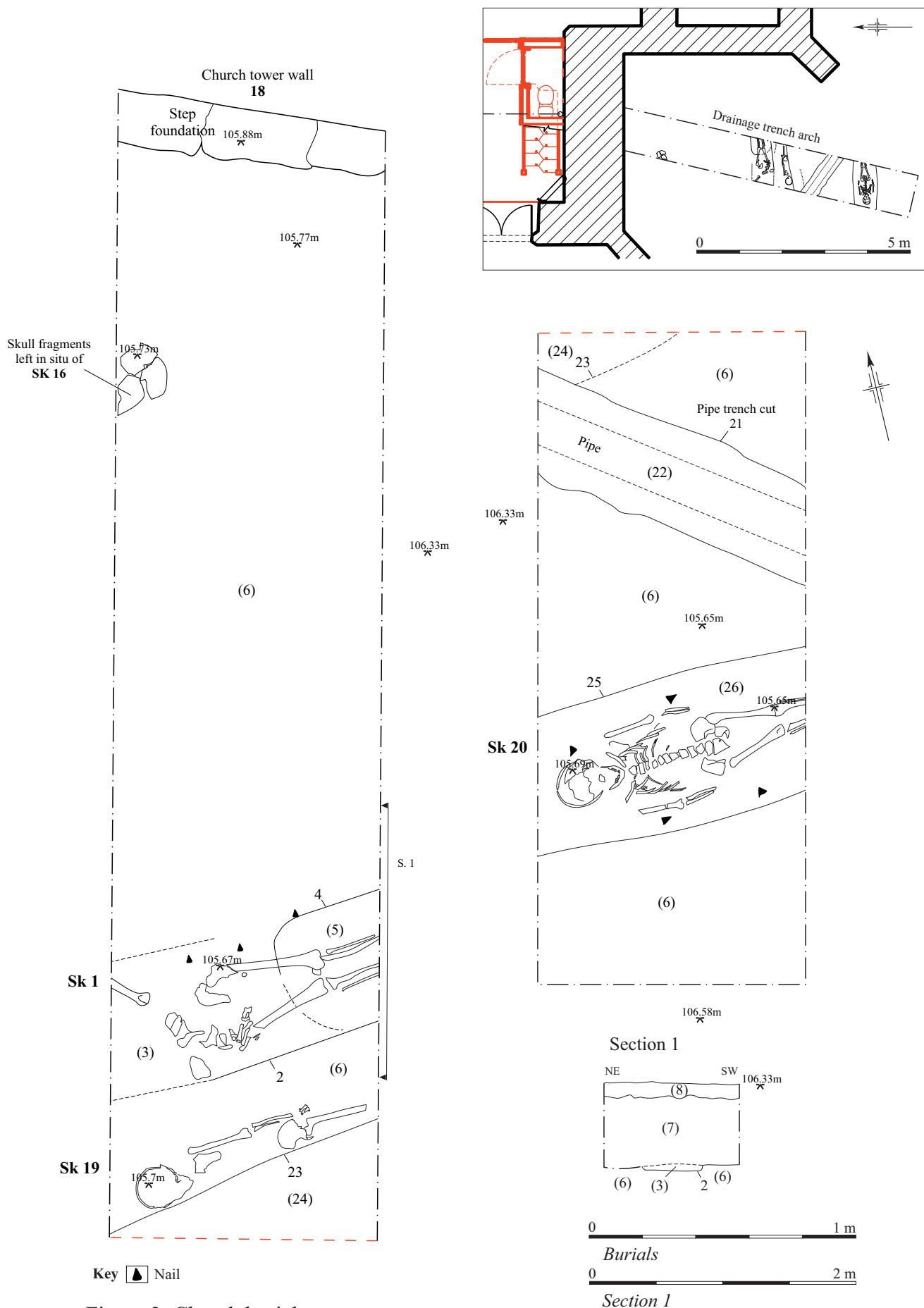


Figure 3: Church burials

### ***Human Remains and Graves***

In total four sets of skeletal remains were recorded within the soakaway trench to the south of the church, numbered- SK1, SK16, SK19 and SK20. All the inhumations were aligned west to east. Two probable grave cuts (4 and 23) were also recorded, although not excavated.

#### ***Grave Cut 4***

Cut 4 (Fig. 3) was located c. 3m south of the church tower at a depth of c. 0.7m (105.63m AOD) below the current ground surface. The cut was partially revealed beneath the legs of SK No1.

The cut was sub rectangular in plan, aligned northeast-southwest, 0.4m wide (as seen) and filled with mid brown, silty clay (5).

The cut was not investigated, although almost certainly represented the west end of a grave.

#### ***Skeletal Remains No 1***

Skeleton No 1 (Fig. 3) was located c. 3.4m south of the church tower at a depth of 0.64m (105.69m AOD) below the current ground surface. The legs overlaid the backfill (5) of grave cut 4.

The skeletal remains comprised the disturbed remains of vertebrae, pelvis, legs and upper left arm. The upper torso, lower legs and feet were beyond the limits of the excavation.

The remains appeared to be of an adult. No pathology was noted. Two nails recorded immediately to the north of the remains provide evidence for a coffin.

#### ***Skeletal Remains No 16.***

Skeleton No 16 (Fig. 3) was located c. 0.8m south of the church tower at a depth of c. 0.6m (105.73m AOD) below the current ground surface.

The skeletal remains comprised disturbed skull fragments only. Minimal investigation revealed the mandible and cervical vertebrae were in the proper position in relation to the skull, indicating the remains were almost certainly articulated.

The skull appeared to be comparatively thick and has been tentatively estimated to be an adult. No pathology was noted. No grave cut was defined.

As the remains were below the impact of the works, and in agreement with the client and vicar, the remains were protected and left *in-situ*.

#### ***Skeletal Remains No 19***

Skeleton No 19 (Fig. 3) was located c. 4 south of the church tower at a depth of 0.59m (105.7m AOD) below the current ground surface.

The skeletal remains comprised skull, left half of the torso and left upper femur. The right half of the remains had been truncated by cut 23.

From a photograph the remains were estimated to be between 15 and 18 years of age (pers comm Sharon Clough - Osteoarchaeologist). No pathology was noted.

### ***Grave Cut 23***

Cut 23 (Fig. 3) was located c. 4.4m south of the church tower at a depth of c. 0.6m (105.63m AOD) below the current ground surface.

The cut was linear in plan, aligned northeast-southwest, 0.6m wide (as seen) and filled with mid brown, silty clay (24).

The cut was not investigated, although clearly truncated the southern extent of Skeletal Remains No 19. With little doubt the cut represented a later, deeper grave.

### ***Skeletal Remains No 20***

Skeleton No 20 (Fig. 3, Plate. 2) was located c. 5.6m south of the church tower at a depth of 0.59m (105.7m AOD) below the current ground surface.

The skeletal remains comprised upper legs, torso and skull. The lower legs and feet extended beyond the limit of the excavation. Some of the skeletal remains, particularly the hands, had eroded away.

From a photograph the remains were estimated to be between 9 and 10 years of age (pers comm Sharon Clough - Osteoarchaeologist). No pathology was noted. Four nails were recorded, two to the north and two to the south of the remains, providing evidence of a coffin.



*Plate 2. Skeletal remains No 20.*

### ***Service Pits- Tower Foundations (14 and 15)***

Two service pits were excavated against the north wall of the church tower (Fig. 2), one internally, one externally. An access hole was also excavated through the foundations (Fig. 3, Plates. 3 and 4).



*Plates 3 and 4. Service pits against internal (left) and external (right) north wall (15) of church tower.*

A deposit (13) was observed within both of the service pits excavated within the church tower (Plate. 3, Fig. 3), and comprised moderately compact, mid brown clay silt with 5% small, fragmented human bone inclusions, 0.66m thick. This deposit almost certainly represents a graveyard soil formed prior to the construction of the church tower in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. This deposit was cut by the construction of the north tower wall (14). Both the wall (14) and graveyard soil (13) were overlain by a deposit (12) of loose limestone rubble, 0.14m thick. This deposit is probably associated with the tower floor, as suggested by its looseness and general character, although the possibility it is associated with the construction of the tower cannot be discounted. Deposit 13 was overlain by a layer of concrete rubble (11), a levelling layer for the current tower floor, which is formed from modern, orange and grey earthenware tiles (10) laid in a checkerboard pattern.

#### ***North Tower Wall (14 and 15)***

The north tower wall (Plate. 4, Fig. 3) was recorded to a depth of 0.64m from the current ground surface (the base of the foundations were not revealed). It was constructed from undressed limestone (0.8m x 0.4m) in random linear courses, bonded (where visible) by a pale yellow sandy mortar.

#### ***South Tower Wall (18)***

The south tower foundations (Plate. 5, Fig. 3) was recorded to a depth of 0.6m from the current ground surface (the base of the foundations were not revealed). The base of the foundations was formed from a large undressed limestone (as seen), measuring 0.9m x 0.2m x 0.01m, forming a stepped foundation base. This was overlain by a generally linear course of undressed limestone, 0.3m wide, 0.3m high, bonded by a pale yellow sandy mortar. The foundations were overlain by a (above ground) chamfer course.



**Plate 5.** Southern, external foundations (18) of tower. Note stepped foundation and chamfer course. View to north.

#### 4 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING

No significant finds were noted or retained during the course of the watching brief. A number of small, fragmented and disarticulated skeletal remains were recovered by the contractors during the course of their works, which were reburied beneath the floor of the tower along with the human remains recovered during the course of the archaeological monitoring.

No deposits with significant environmental potential were observed.

#### 5 DISCUSSION

Three partially exposed inhumations which would have been impacted by the Trench Arch System trench were exhumed and reburied beneath the floor of the church's west tower under the supervision of Revn Rosamund Roberts. A further inhumation was identified, although as it was below the impact of the works the remains were protected and preserved *in-situ*. The foundations for the north and south walls of the 15<sup>th</sup> century church tower were recorded, which appeared to be of typical medieval construction. Deposits recorded within the service trench to the north of the church, parallel to the current path, did not reveal any evidence of burials or any charnel suggesting the path was well established and respected by the graves.

Two of the graves were individuals estimated to be aged 9-10 and 15-18. Two were interpreted, from what was observed, as adults. From the small sample of inhumations observed there would appear to be no evidence for zoning by age within the church's graveyard. The sex of the individuals could not be established due to the age or condition of the inhumations. Where established, the inhumations and graves were aligned west to east, respecting the alignment of the church.

There was limited but convincing evidence, in the form of nails, that two of the inhumations had been interred within coffins. Coffins were the most common container throughout the 11<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Gilchrist and Sloane 2005), most frequently in the form of a simple rectangular box.

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**APPENDIX A***Table 1. Context Inventory*

Cntxt	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)	Finds	Interpretation	Date
01	Skeletal Remains	Supine. Aligned W-E.	1m (as seen)	None	Christian Inhumation. Fill of 2. Not fully revealed. Partly exhumed and re-buried.	Medieval
02	Cut	Linear	1m x 0.5m	-	Grave cut	Medieval
03	Fill	Mid brown, clay silt	0.2m thick	None	Backfill of 2	Medieval
04	Cut	Sub rectangular	0.46m wide, 0.4m long (as seen)	-	Probable grave cut, filled by 5. Cut by 2. Unexcavated.	Medieval
05	Fill	Mid brown, clay silt	-	-	Backfill of 4. Unexcavated.	Medieval
06	Layer	Mid-dark brown clay silt. Up to 10% small fragmented charnel.	-	-	Deposit representing the backfill of (undefined) intercutting graves. Cut by 2 and 4. Same as 7.	Medieval
07	Layer	Mid-dark brown clay silt. Up to 7% small fragmented charnel.	-	-	Deposit representing the backfill of (undefined) intercutting graves. Overlies and is the same as 6.	Medieval
08	Layer	Clayey organic loam.	0.1m thick	None	Turf and topsoil	
09	Deposit	Clay	-	--	Geological horizon	Jurassic Period
10	Structure	Square tile floor	0.04m thick	-	Current floor of church tower.	20 <sup>th</sup> C
11	Layer	Loose rubble.	0.1m thick	-	Make up for floor 10.	20 <sup>th</sup> C
12	Layer	Loose, limestone rubble	0.14m	-	Make up for floor 10 or associated with construction of tower in 15 <sup>th</sup> C.	-
13	Layer	Mid brown sandy silt, 5% small and fragmented charnel	0.66m thick	-	Grave yard soil. Cut by tower foundations 14.	Medieval
14	Structure	Unfinished limestone laid in random linear courses	0.64m (as seen)	-	Foundations for north wall of tower (seen internally). Same as 15	15 <sup>th</sup> C
15	Structure	Unfinished limestone laid in random linear courses	0.64m (as seen)	-	Foundations for north wall of tower (seen externally). Same as 14	15 <sup>th</sup> C
16	Skeletal Remains	Supine. Aligned W-E.	-	-	Christian inhumation. Skull fragments revealed only. Confirmed as articulated. Unexcavated as below impact of works.	Medieval
17	Layer	Redeposited topsoil	0.3m thick	None		
18	Structure	Foundation courses	0.35m	-	Church tower foundations, south side.	E 15 <sup>th</sup> C
19	Skeletal Remains	Supine. Aligned W-E	-	-	Christian Inhumation. Grave cut not defined. Not fully revealed. Partly exhumed and re-buried.	Medieval
20	Skeletal Remains	Supine. Aligned W-E	-	-	Christian Inhumation. Fill of 25. Not fully revealed. Partly exhumed and re-buried.	Medieval
21	Cut	Linear feature	0.36m wide	-	Mod pipe trench. Filled by 22	20 <sup>th</sup> /21 <sup>st</sup> C
22	Fill	Ceramic pipe			Fill of 21	20 <sup>th</sup> /21 <sup>st</sup> C

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23	Cut	Linear	0.5m wide	-	Probable grave. Unexcavated.	Medieval ?
24	Fill	Brown, clay silt.		-	Fill of 23. Unexcavated.	Medieval ?
25	Cut	Linear feature	0.6m wide	-	Grave cut for Skeleton 20.	Medieval ?
26	Fill	Brown clay silt	0.1m deep.	-	Fill of 25.	Medieval ?