St Andrew's Church

Chesterton, Cambridge

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

November 2023

Client: Freeland Rees Roberts on behalf of Chesterton St Andrews, PCC



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St Andrew's Church, Chesterton, Cambridge

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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SUMMARY

Between the 25th to the 28th September 2023 Oxford Archaeology carried out a watching brief at St Andrew's Church, Chesterton, Cambridge during the installation of a new drain and soakaway close to the outside wall of the south aisle.

The excavation of a pipe trench for the drain revealed evidence of an earlier, post-medieval, drain, constructed of ceramic drain bricks. Below this, the trench revealed distributed ground which contained numerous disarticulated fragments of human skeletal remains, along with a small number of 17th-18th century coffin fittings.

The excavation of the soakaway took place outside of the area of disturbed ground and revealed the articulated or semi-articulated remains of five individuals. The cuts of graves relating to two upstanding gravestones were also observed within the soakaway, but the inhumations associated with these graves lay below the excavated depth of the soakaway.

Evidence for multiple phases of intercutting graves was revealed within the soakaway, as well as a small amount of medieval pottery.

All the human skeletal remains were immediately re-interred in the churchyard following the completion of the groundworks.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Freeland Rees Roberts on behalf of Chesterton St Andrews, PCC for commissioning this project.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Andrew Greef. The fieldwork was carried out by Neal Mason. Survey and digitising was carried out by Katharine Waring.



1 Introduction

1.1 Project details

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Freeland Rees Roberts on behalf of Chesterton St Andrews, PCC to undertake a watching brief at the site of St Andrew's Church, Chesterton, Cambridge (TL 462 596). The work monitored involved the installation on a new drain and accompanying soakaway on the south side of the church, through part of the existing graveyard. The church is a Grade 1 listed building (List Entry Number 1112541).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken at the request of the Ely Diocesan Faculty. A brief was set by Diocesan Archaeological Advisor. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 St Andrew's Church lies in the parish of Chesterton, to the north-east of the historic core of the city of Cambridge (Fig. 1). The church grounds subject to monitoring was located immediately to the south of the building, with the new drain trench running from close to the south-west corner of the church to just beyond the south-east corner of the church (Fig. 2). The trench ran parallel with and about 1m away from the outside wall of the south aisle. This trench then extended to the south-east for approximately 2.7m to the location of the new soakaway (approximately 1.6m³ in size).
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is mapped as river terrace deposits of sand and gravel overlaying gault formation mudstone (BGS Online Viewer, 2023). The site lies at approximately .7m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The monitored works took place in very close proximity to the church and within its long-associated church yard. No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts associated with anything other than the church were encountered, and consequently a wider review of the Historic Environment Record of the area is not required here.

1.3.1 The earliest manifestation of the village of Chesterton is likely to have developed around St Andrew's church (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record 05558; Listed Building 1112541) and the manor house, with early medieval settlement organised around the land bounded by High Street and Church Lane. Church Lane is recorded from 1327, and St Andrew's Church is documented from 1224. The main fabric of the present church is of 14th and 15th century date, but with extensive alterations having been carried out in the 19th century. The south aisle was extended to its present length c.1330 and may account for some of the disturbed ground encountered during this monitoring.



2 PROJECT AIMS

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:
 - i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
 - ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
 - iii. To recover any human skeletal remains disturbed by the ground works for re-burial within the churchyard.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 This investigation was carried out according to the standards outlined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) for watching briefs (CIfA 2020).
- 2.2.2 The watching brief was conducted during machine groundworks undertaken by contractors working on behalf of the client. This consisted of the excavation of a west-south-west to east-north-east linear trench for a new drainage pipe laid out parallel to the outside wall of the south aisle of the church (18.2m long, 0.35-.04m wide and generally 0.8m deep). Three connecting channels were also dug from this trench to join the new pipe to existing downpipes on the church wall. At its eastern end, this trench extended south-east for approximately 2.7m into a new soakaway, which measured 1.6m³.
- 2.2.3 In both the pipe trench and the soakaway the topsoil/turf and subsequent deposits were removed by machine in c. 0.1m spits under archaeological supervision. Following the removal of each spit the base of the works was inspected and the contents of each bucket was hand-sifted for finds.
- 2.2.4 Only previously disturbed ground was encountered in the pipe trench. In the soakaway the cuts of two graves were visible along with deposits which probably constituted the backfills of previously disturbed/truncated burials.
- 2.2.5 All features were investigated and recorded to provide an accurate record of the remains, whilst at the same time minimising disturbance to archaeological structures, features, and deposits. All relationships between features or deposits were investigated and recorded. Any natural subsoil surface revealed was hand cleaned and examined for archaeological deposits and artefacts.
- 2.2.6 Excavation in the soakaway characterised the full archaeological sequence down to undisturbed natural deposits.
- 2.2.7 All human remains were re-interred in the soakaway following rapid on-site recording by an osteologist at the request of the vicar, with none retained for further study. The artefacts (pottery) were recovered for post-excavation analysis and will be re-interred in the churchyard following the approval of this report.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the watching brief are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the monitored areas. A context inventory with dimensions and depths of all deposits (where visible) can be found in App. A. Finds data and spot dates are presented in App. B and human skeletal remains data in App. C.
- 3.1.2 All cut numbers appear in **bold** in the text. In some cases skeleton numbers were assigned on-site to graves but those skeletons were not reached/identified, thus there were no human remains associated with those numbers. Skeleton numbers were also assigned to a number of disarticulated skulls.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soil sequence in the drain trench was very uniform. The natural geology was not reached, with the lowest deposit being a light brown sandy silt of disturbed ground, which in turn was overlain by turf. In the deeper soakaway the natural geology of sand and gravel was encountered. This was overlain by a deposit probably consisting of previously disturbed grave fills. This was overlain by the turf.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the watching brief were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 Although no archaeological features were encountered in the drain trench, artefacts and ecofacts were recovered from within the disturbed ground (18).
- 3.3.2 The cuts of graves relating to two extant gravestones were immediately visible within the soakaway upon removal of the turf. Whilst the burials associated with these cuts were not reached, continued excavation revealed a deposit containing disarticulated human skeletal remains (HSR) into which these burials were cut (14). Close to the bottom of the soakaway part of an articulated skeleton associated with an earlier burial was encountered and excavated. The cuts of the two graves associated with the gravestones were still visible cutting the natural geology at the bottom of the soakaway.

3.4 The drain trench (Fig. 2, Plate 1)

3.4.1 A west-south-west to east-north-east trench for a new drainage pipe was excavated parallel to the outside wall of the south aisle of the church (18.2m long, 0.35-.04m wide and generally 0.8m deep; Plate 1). Three connecting channels were also dug from this trench to join the new pipe to existing downpipes on the church wall. These channels were generally aligned northeast to south-west and were 2m-2.2m long. At its eastern end, this trench extended south-east for approximately 2.7m into a new soakaway (see below).



- The turf along the pipe trench (19) measured 0.2m thick and a tarmac footpath was set into it parallel with the church, extending from the entrance in the south-west corner to approximately halfway along the church. Immediately underneath the turf, approximately 0.8m from the outside wall of the south aisle, a line of yellow ceramic drain bricks was encountered. This line was seen in all three of the connecting channels and was probably the remains of an earlier, defunct, post-medieval drain (Appendix B.3).
- 3.4.3 This drain truncated the deposit below the turf, which consisted of an artefact-rich light brown sandy silt (18). This deposit extended below the depth required for the new pipe trench and had already been identified as disturbed ground by the client. The reasons for this disturbance may include the construction of the south aisle extension in the 14th century, construction of the post-medieval drain, construction of the tarmac footpath, and/or centuries of grave cutting.
- 3.4.4 Multiple pieces of disarticulated human skeletal remains (HSR) were recovered from this deposit, with the locations recorded within 2m sections. However, because of the nature of the drain construction, it was deemed not suitable to return the remains to the locations within the pipe trench, and all the HSR was subsequently re-interred in the soakaway. A small number of 18th to 19th century iron coffin fittings were also recovered from this deposit (App. B.1).
- 3.4.5 At its eastern end the pipe trench was diverted to the south-east for approximately 2.7m to the new soakaway location. The stretch of the trench passed between two gravestones, but no cuts relating to these graves were encountered in the trench. These two stones were off-set from the otherwise uniform arrangements of gravestones in the churchyard, probably indicating that they had been relocated at some point (Plate 2).

3.5 The soakaway (Figs. 2 & 3, Plates 3-7)

The soakaway consisted of a cutting measuring 1.6m x 1.6m across and 1.6m deep which was machine excavated approximately 2.7m to the south-east of the eastern end of the pipe trench. Upon removal of the turf the cuts of two graves relating to nearby gravestones were visible in the underlying deposit (Graves 1 and 2, Plates 4 and 5). Grave 1 measured 0.66m wide in the section and the associated burial was not been reached at the bottom of the soakaway. Grave 2 measured 1.06m wide in the section and the associated burial was also not reached. Both of these graves were aligned west-southwest to east-north-east and numerous disarticulated HSR were recovered from their backfills (8 and 9 respectively).

Deposit 14

The deposit underlying the turf (and truncated by Graves 1 and 2) consisted of a light brown sandy silt (14) measuring 1.2m thick which may have been the continuation of deposit 18 or the result of multiple instances of inter-cutting graves. This deposit was 1.2m thick and contained numerous pieces of disarticulated HSR. A small amount of medieval pottery was also recovered: four joining sherds of medieval South-East Fenland Calcareous Buff ware, dating to c.1150-1450 AD (App. B.2).



Grave 3

3.5.3 At a depth of 1.4m the partial remains of an articulated skeleton were encountered (SK 4). Extending from the north-western side of the soakaway and aligned east to west, this comprised the ribs and almost complete set of vertebrae, along with the clavicle, scapula, humerus, radius and ulna on the right side, and the ulna and radius of the left. The rest of the skeleton was not revealed within the soakaway (Fig 3, Plan 1, Plate 6). On-site osteological analysis indicated that these were the remains of an adult male (App. C.1). No cut for Grave 3 was visible either in the section or temporary base of the soakaway, and all that can be said at this level is that it must have been at least 0.5m wide.

Skeleton 12

3.5.4 Close to the western corner of the soakaway an articulated radius and ulna (SK 12) were revealed at the same depth of Grave 3 (Fig 3, Plan 1, Plate 6). Again, no cut was visible for the grave associated with these remains (Grave 11), so only approximations of its dimensions have been recorded.

Further possibly articulated remains

3.5.5 HSR relating to a further three individuals were identified during the on-site osteological recording, each represented by multiple elements and with completeness ranges of 15-20% (SKs 15, 16 and 17; App. C.1). This unfortunately implies that these may have derived from articulated/semi-articulated remains disturbed during the soakaway's excavation.

Base of the soakaway (Plate 7)

3.5.6 Upon the removal of SKs 4 and 12, the machine excavation continued to a final depth of 1.6m. This involved the continued excavation of the fills of Graves 1 and 2 (fills 8 and 9) and earlier deposit 14. At a depth of 1.5m the natural geology of sand and gravel was reached, within which were visible the cuts of Graves 1 and 2, and traces of the remaining backfill of Grave 3 (7). All sections of the soakaway were recorded (Section 1; Fig. 3).

3.6 Finds summary

- 3.6.1 Five iron coffin fittings dating to the 18th and 19th centuries were identified during the monitoring works.
- 3.6.2 The four joining sherds of medieval pottery represent evidence of locally produced pottery use in the area.
- 3.6.3 Several fragments of not closely dateable CBM were recovered during the watching brief and were not retained for analysis.
- 3.6.4 Along with human skeletal remains relating to four articulated or semiarticulated individuals, the large number of disarticulated remains uncovered during the works represent a minimum number of 20 individuals.



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Watching Brief objectives and results

- 4.1.1 The watching brief objectives were achieved in that the archaeological remains were recorded, selected artefacts and ecofacts were subject to analysis and the human skeletal remains were treated with respect and reinterred within the churchyard without removal from the site a key requirement of the brief.
- 4.1.2 The results confirmed the presence of a relatively large area of disturbed ground close to the south aisle of St Andrew's church. The presence of articulated remains further away from the south aisle, in the soakaway, allows for the approximate extent of the disturbed ground to be estimated in this area.
- 4.1.3 Medieval pottery recovered from the soakaway, and post-medieval coffin fittings from the pipe trench illustrates the longevity of activity in the churchyard.
- 4.1.4 The presence of a post-medieval drain close to the south aisle wall illustrates the continued issues St Andrews has had with drainage, which this works was intended to finally resolve.
- 4.1.5 The large amount of human skeletal remains encountered was not unusual for intrusive works through a churchyard of this kind.



APPENDIX A CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Category	Feature Type	Function	Cut	Filled By	Length	Breadth	Depth	Orientation
1	cut	grave	inhumation	1	SK 5, 8	0.9	0.66		WSW-ENE
2	cut	grave	inhumation	2	SK 6, 9	0.3	1.06		WSW-ENE
3	cut	grave	inhumation	3	SK 4, 7	0.7	0.5		E-W
4	fill	skeleton	inhumation	3					
5	fill	skeleton	inhumation	1					
6	fill	skeleton	inhumation	2					
7	fill	grave	grave backfill	3					
8	fill	grave	grave backfill	1				1.6	
9	fill	grave	grave backfill	2				1.6	
10	VOID								
וו	cut	grave	inhumation	11	SK 12				
12	fill	skeleton	inhumation	11					
13	fill	grave	grave backfill	11					
14	fill	grave	grave backfill					1.2	
15	fill	skeleton	disturbed inhumation						
16	fill	skeleton	disturbed inhumation						
17	fill	skeleton	disturbed inhumation						
18	layer		disturbed ground					0.8	
19	layer	turf						0.2	



APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Metalwork

By James Fairbairn

- B.1.1 A small assemblage of coffin or casket furniture was recorded on site during the monitoring work at St Andrew's Church. The pieces consist of two rectangular handle plates, two diamond shaped handle lugs and a subcircular handle with central lug (Plate 9).
- B.1.2 These fitments are heavily corroded and incomplete. They are likely to have come from more than one decomposed casket. Stylistically the fitments are typical of those used in the late 18th century and throughout most of the 19th century.

B.2 Medieval pottery

By Carole Fletcher

B.2.1 Four joining sherds (0.043kg) from the rim of a medieval South-east Fenland Calcareous Buff ware vessel (SEFEN, c.1150-1450, Spoerry 2016, 194-196), were recovered from context 14. The rim, which is everted and externally thickened, with an internal bevel, is from a short-necked jar with a dimeter of 200mm and has an estimated vessel equivalence (EVE) of 16%. The sherds are only moderately abraded and the breaks relatively recent, possibly caused by the machine used for the excavation of the soakaway. The graveyard's origins lie in the 13th century and the presence of medieval pottery, in what was originally a medieval graveyard, is not unexpected.

B.3 Ceramic Building Material

By Ted Levermore

B.3.1 A single example of a near-complete drain brick was assessed from site record photographs and measurements taken on site. The drain brick had a fairly large, squared form (H175mm x L290mm x W315mm). Externally, the outer arrises were chamfered giving it a segmented form. Internally, it had a single large U-shaped channel running its length. It was likely made via extrusion. It was probably a locally produced city drain and may be of a kind quite common in Cambridge. Its yellow gault fabric is typical of later post-medieval ceramic building material in Cambridgeshire. Ceramic field drains have an uncertain start date, but they were relatively common by c. 1800. This form is considered one of the earliest (cf. Scottish Brick History/Museum of English Rural Life: https://www.scottishbrickhistory.co.uk/evolution-of-the-land-drainage-tile/). They were either used singly, as a channel, or in pairs to create a closed 'pipe'.



APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Human Skeletal Remains

By Zoë Uí Choileáin

Introduction

C.1.1 The construction of a soakaway at St Andrews church truncated two observable grave cuts (1 and 2). Five semi articulated skeletons are recorded in Table 2. The fill of the graves and surrounding deposits in the soakaway and the adjoining pipe trench contained a large number of disarticulated remains representing a minimum of 20 individuals. These are recorded in Table 3.

Methodology

- C.1.2 Bone was recorded at the grave side and reinterred immediately. Recording followed guidelines and standards as laid out in Brickley and McKinley (2004) and Mays et al (2004).
- C.1.3 The condition of the bone was recorded referring to the scale 0-5 scale devised by McKinley where 0 equals no erosion and 5 represents the total erosion of the cortical bone (Brickley and McKinley 2004, fig 6).
- C.1.4 Age of adults was estimated where possible based on epiphyseal fusion, observation of tooth wear (Miles 1963, Brothwell 1981), changes to the auricular surface (Buckberry and Chamberlain 2002) and the closure of cranial sutures (Meindl and Lovejoy 1985).
- C.1.5 Age of juveniles was based on epiphyseal fusion, greatest length of long bones (Schaefer et al 2009) and tooth eruption (Ubelaker 1989).
- C.1.6 Estimation of diagnostic sex was based on observation of traits on pelvis and skull fragments (Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994).
- C.1.7 Age categories used within this report are presented in Table 1 below.

Category	Age
Juvenile	4 to 12
Sub-Adult	12 to 18
Adult	18+
Young Adult	18-25
Prime Adult	25-45
Older Adult	45+

Table 1: Age categories used within this report

C.1.8 Results

C.1.9 All bone was well preserved and measured a 1 on the 0-5 scale devised by McKinley (Brickley and McKinely, 2004, fig 6). This means that there is very little erosion of the cortical bone. The level of fragmentation was low-medium



meaning that while almost all bones had at least one break most were relatively complete and easily identifiable to element.

C.1.10 The articulated skeletons represented four adults. Skeletons 4 and 17 were both male based on cranial and pelvic traits (Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994). The elements containing diagnostic traits were missing in skeletons 12, 15 and 16.

Sk no	Completeness	Age	Sex	Comments	
4	50%	Adult	Male	Very robust muscle attachments	
12	<5%	?	?		
15	15%	Young Adult	?	Aged based on Auricular surface	
				Age based on saggital and lamboid sutu	
16	20%	Prime adult	?	closure	
				Age based on saggital and lamboid suture	
17	20%	Prime adult	Male	closure	

Table 2: A summary of the articulated bone

C.1.11 The disarticulated bone represented a mixture of juveniles, sub-adults, and adults. These are summarised below in Table 3.

Context	MNI	Comments		
14	5	4 adults, 1 sub-adult		
1	4	1 older female, 1 young adult, 2 adults		
8 and 9	9	child<6, Child <10, older female, 6 adults		
8	2	Adult		
totals 20				

Table 3: Disarticulated bone



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APPENDIX E OASIS REPORT FORM

Proj	ect Details								
OA:	SIS Number	oxfordar3	3-519536	5					
Pro	ject Name	St Andre	w's Chu	ırch, Chesterton	, Cambridge, A	Archaeo	logical Watching Brief		
Sta	rt of Fieldwork	25/09/23			End of Fields	work	28/09/23		
Pre	vious Work	No			Future Work		No		
Proj	ect Reference (Codes							
Site	e Code	ECB7199			Planning Ap	p. No.	N/A		
HEI	R Number	ECB7199			Related Nun	nbers	N/A		
Pro	mpt	Γ	Diocesa	an Faculty					
	velopment Type		Other						
Pla	ce in Planning Pro	cess	Not kn	ot known/Not recorded					
Tech	nniques used (t	ick all that	t apply	/)					
	Aerial Photogra interpretation	phy –		Grab-sampling	9		Remote Operated Vehicle Survey		
	Aerial Photogra	phy - new		Gravity-core			Sample Trenches		
	Annotated Sket	ch		Laser Scanning			Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure		
	Augering		\boxtimes	Measured Sur	vey		Targeted Trenches		
	Dendrochronok Survey	ogical		Metal Detectors			Test Pits		
	Documentary S	earch		Phosphate Su	rvey		Topographic Survey		
	Environmental :			Photogramme			Vibro-core		
	Fieldwalking	, -		Photographic	Survey		Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)		
	Geophysical Sur	vey		Rectified Phot	ography		,		
Mo	nument	Perio	od.		Obiect		Period		

Monument	Period
Church	Medieval (1066 to
	1540)
	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.

Object	Period
HSR	Medieval (1066 to 1540)
HSR	Post Medieval (1540 to 1901)
Pottery	Medieval (1066 to 1540)
СВМ	Post Medieval (1540 to 1901)
Metal coffin fittings	Post Medieval (1540 to 1901)

Project Location



County	Cambi	ridgeshire		Address (include	ding Postcode	·)	
District	South	Cambridgeshire	<u> </u>	St Andrew's Church,			
Parish	Cheste	erton		Chesterton,			
HER office	CHET			Cambridge CE	4 1DT		
Size of Study Area	<0.1ha						
National Grid Ref	TL 462	596					
Project Originators							
Organisation		Oxford Archae	oloav, Camb	ridge Office			
Project Brief Origin	ator			dvisor, Diocese o	f Elv		
Project Design Orig		Oxford Archae	_				
Project Manager	,	Andrew Greef	<u> </u>				
Project Supervisor		Neal Mason					
r roject sapervisor		Hearthason					
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Project Archives							
		Location		ID .			
Physical Archive (Fi	nds)	N/A		N/A			
Digital Archive		ADS		ECB			
Paper Archive		CCC		ECB	7199		
Physical Contents	Pı	resent?	Diait	al files	Paperwoi	k associated	
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Animal Bones							
Ceramics							
Environmental							
Glass							
Human Remains							
Industrial							
Leather							
Metal							
Stratigraphic							
Survey							
Textiles							
Wood							
Worked Bone							
Worked Stone/Lithi							
None None							
Other							
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Digital Media			Pape	er Media			

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Aerial Photos

Diary

Drawing

Manuscript

Context Sheets

Correspondence

Images (Digital photos)

Illustrations (Figures/Plates)

Database

Geophysics

Moving Image

GIS



St Andrew's Church, Chesterton, Cambridge

Spreadsheets	Мар	
Survey	Matrices	
Text	Microfiche	
Virtual Reality	Miscellaneous	
	Research/Notes	
	Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	
	Plans	
	Report	\boxtimes
	Sections	
	Survey	

Further Comments

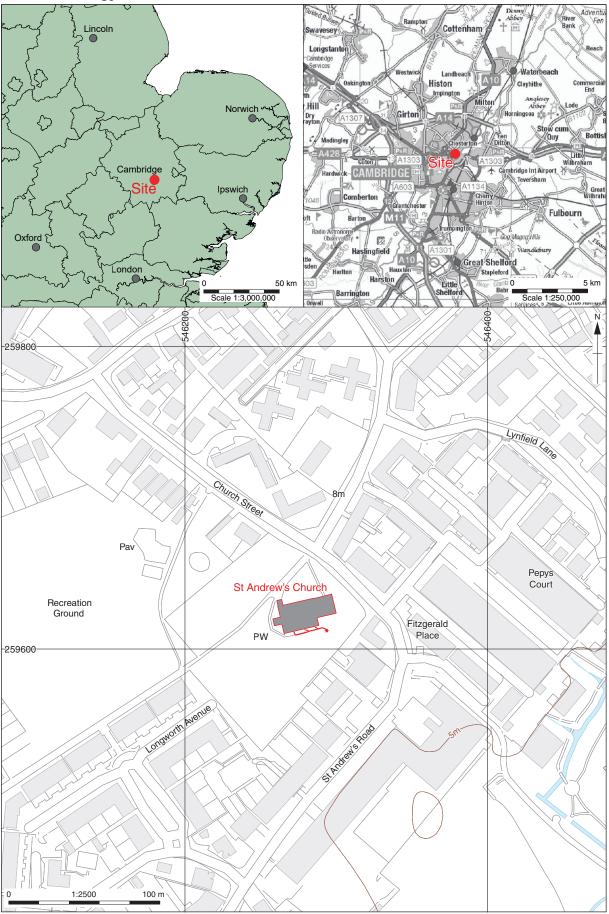
Material archive to be returned to church once analysis is completed.

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02 November 2023

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Figure 1: Site location



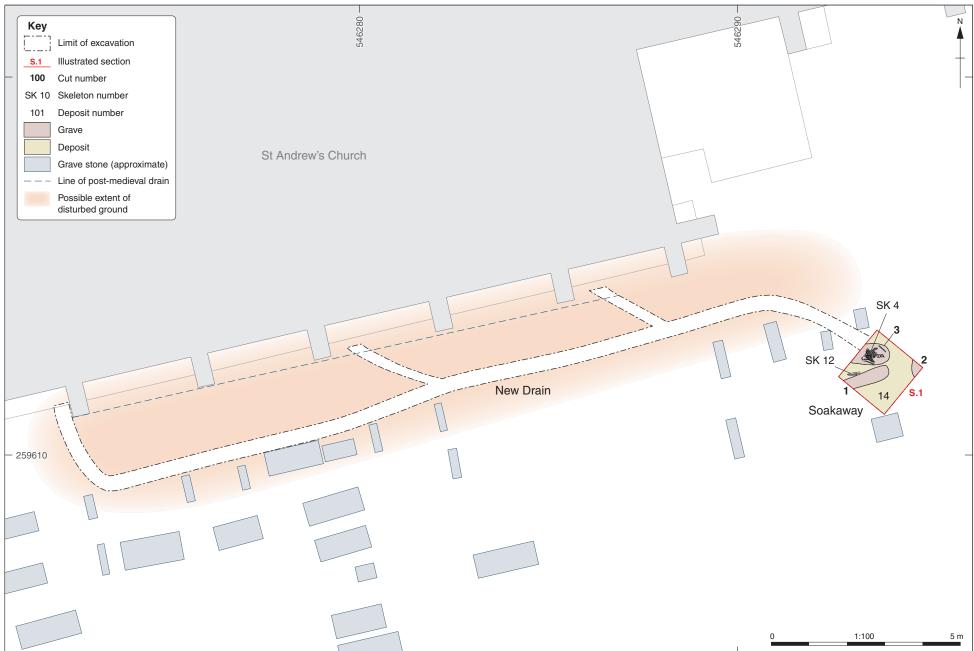


Figure 2: Plan showing the location of the drain trench and soakaway



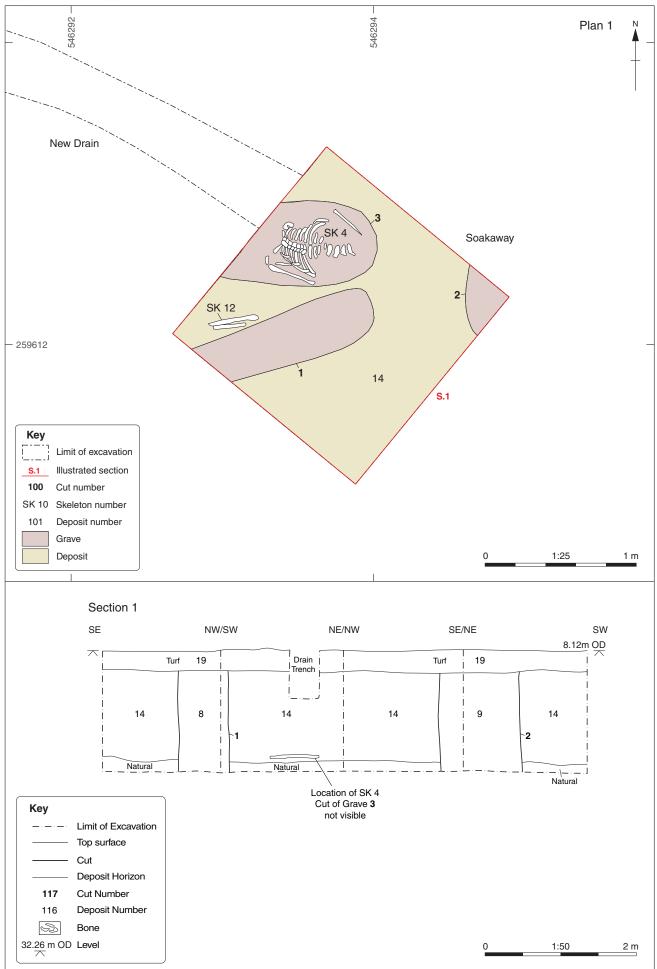


Figure 3: Detailed plan and section of the soakaway



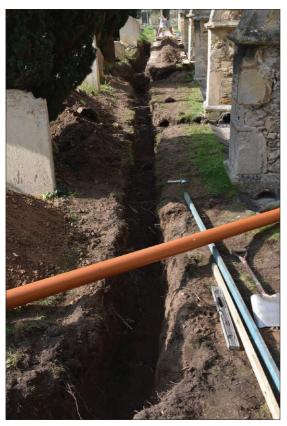


Plate 1: Drain trench through disturbed ground (18), looking west



Plate 2: Drain trench through disturbed ground between two possibly relocated gravestones, looking south-east





Plate 3: Soakaway location prior to excavation, looking south-east



Plate 4: Gravestone associated with grave 1 (foreground) and monument associated with grave 2 (background), looking south-east





Plate 5: Initial turf removal from the soakaway showing cut of grave 1, looking north-west



Plate 6: The soakaway at 1m depth, showing Skeleton 4 and fragments of Skeleton 12 $\,$





Plate 7: The soakaway at its final depth of 1.6m, showing cut of grave 1 (foreground) and grave 2 (background), looking south-east $\frac{1}{2}$



Plate 8: Section of ceramic drain brick





Plate 9: Selection of coffin fittings retrieved from disturbed ground (18)

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